the weekly Standard

DECEMBER 18, 2006 $3.95

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Paul T. Hill is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education. He is also a research professor in the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs and director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, both at the University of Washington.

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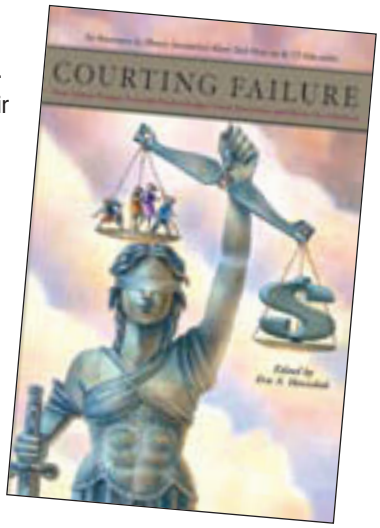
Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences.



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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2006, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of News America Incorporated.

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The Wisdom of Soldiers

Among the many intelligent and forceful criticisms of the meretricious Baker-Hamilton report, THE SCRAPBOOK's favorites have been from soldiers, ranging from lieutenant colonels to sergeants (THE SCRAPBOOK, a former private first class, has a soft spot for sergeants).

First, listen to T.F. Boggs, a 24-year-old sergeant in the Army Reserves, back home from his second deployment to Iraq:

"After watching the Iraq Study Group press conference today, I am a firm believer that all politicians are idiots. Okay well not all of them but they all have a problem understanding reality. . . .

"The Iraq Study Group's findings or rather, recommendations are a joke and could have only come from a group of old people who have been stuck in Washington for too long. The brainpower of the ISG has come up with a new direction for our country and that includes negotiating with countries whose people chant 'Death to America' and whose leaders deny the Holocaust and call for Israel to be wiped from the face of the earth. Baker and Hamilton want us to get terrorist-supporting countries involved in fighting terrorism! If I am the only one who finds something wrong with that, then please let me know because right now I feel like I am the only person who feels this way.

"Not only are the findings of the ISG a joke but the people who led the group (Baker and Hamilton) treat soldiers like they are a joke. One of the main recommendations of the ISG is to send more troops to Iraq in order to train Iraqis so they can secure their own country. But they don't feel that we are doing a good job of that right now because training Iraqis isn't an attractive job for soldiers to do because it isn't a 'career advancing' job. As someone who trained Iraqis from time to time I take personal offense to this remark. In my experience soldiers clamored for the chance to train Iraqis. . . .

"I feel like all of my efforts (30 months of deployment time) and the efforts of all my brothers in arms are all for naught. I thought old people were supposed to be more patient than a 24-year-old, but apparently I have more patience for our victory to unfold in Iraq than 99.9 percent of Americans. Iraq isn't fast food—you can't have what you want and have it now. To completely change a country for the first time in its entire history takes time, and when I say time I don't mean four years.

"Talking doesn't solve anything with a crazed people, bullets do, and we need to be given a chance to work our military magic. Like I told a reporter buddy of mine: War sucks but a world run by Islamofascists sucks more." (This and more from Sgt. Boggs can be found at his blog, *www.boredsoldier.blogspot.com*.)

Then there were these thoughts emailed to a friend from an active-duty Marine lieutenant colonel now serving in Iraq:

"From what I see here in Iraq, the rats are abandoning a sinking ship. Rummy has cut/run, and us slobs out here are on our own. Saw the Iraq Group's recommendations. Sure would hate to be one of these 'embedded' trainers in an Iraqi unit when the support of U.S. forces leave. Can you say POW???

"These clowns, especially Hamilton, are clueless. Either we stay and fight, or we leave with everyone. We lose Marines everyday. It sucks. But we're kicking the sh— out of the Muj when it comes to combat. They don't have a chance if they stand and fight. IED's are their only real hope. I see only a small slice of the war, but for my money, more troops is the answer.

"It's a shame to think that after all the blood and effort here, we're going to walk away with our tails between our legs, just so that the Dems can say 'I told you so,' and get their man/woman in the White House in '08."

True, they don't offer 79 recommendations, but we'll stack the wisdom of these two up against any number of Washington eminences. ♦

Utter Abstractions at Columbia

The December 11 issue of the *New Republic* contains an essay by Andrew Delbanco, a professor at Columbia University and biographer of Herman Melville, on a recent course he taught on "war."

Delbanco is a graceful writer, and some of the texts he uses in his class, like Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" and John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*, deserve to be read and studied. But what struck us about Delbanco's essay was his complaint that most of the students and professors at Columbia, and at our elite universities in general, are insulated from the realities of war: "For the vast majority of students and faculty in places like Columbia—it's different for support and maintenance staff, who are more likely to have friends or family in the line of fire—war is an utter abstraction rather than an imaginable fact."

You gotta love the elitism dripping from asides like "it's different for support and maintenance staff." Still,

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though, Delbanco is right. The academy is isolated from war and the warrior culture.

But here's the thing: Delbanco never mentions in his essay that in Columbia's case (as with many other elite universities) there is a simpler explanation than social class for the situation he laments. Columbia banned the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) from its campus in 1969 at the height of the Vietnam war. And as recently as May 2005, Columbia's Senate (an advisory panel of faculty and students) voted 53-10 to keep Morningside Heights pristinely military free. ♦

"Bad Guys Are Winning"

We saw the above headline in the *International Herald Tribune* last week and reached for our smelling salts: Holy smokes, we thought, they finally realize we're at war. Then we kept reading: "Spam is back—in our inboxes and on everyone's minds."

Oh. Somebody better alert the jihadists not to start sending junk emails—because if they did that, the media might finally roll up their sleeves and join the fight. ♦

Mr. Invisible

James Baker "likes to be the man behind the scenes," writes Evan Thomas in the December 11 issue of *Newsweek*. Curiously, the issue features on its cover . . . a full-length exclusive *Newsweek* photo portrait of Baker and his Iraq Study Group co-chairman, former Indiana congressman Lee Hamilton, to whom, Thomas writes, Baker is "very deferential," for example refusing "to be photographed" without Hamilton present. ♦

Last Word on Baker-Hamilton

Among other things called for by the Iraq Study Group, noted columnist James Lileks last week, was this list of desiderata:

• Syria's full adherence to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 of August 2006, which provides the framework for Lebanon to regain sovereign control over its territory.

• Syria's full cooperation with all investigations into political assassinations in Lebanon, especially those of Rafik Hariri and Pierre Gemayel.

• A verifiable cessation of Syrian aid to Hezbollah and the use of Syrian territory for transshipment of Iranian weapons and aid to Hezbollah. (This step would do much to solve Israel's problem with Hezbollah.)

• Syria's use of its influence with Hamas and Hezbollah for the release of the captured Israeli Defense Force soldiers.

• A verifiable cessation of Syrian efforts to undermine the democratically elected government of Lebanon.

"All conducted under the watchful eyes of unicorns, of course," concluded Lileks. ♦

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Casual

Life with Jeane

In 1982, Jeane Kirkpatrick brought out a collection of her essays under the title of the best known of them, "Dictatorships and Double Standards." The book is dedicated to "Douglas, John, Stuart, and Ricardo."

Douglas, John, and Stuart are the names of the Kirkpatricks' three sons. So who's Ricardo?

I used to wish the public knew, back during the Zoë Baird flap early in the Clinton administration. Baird was the nominee for attorney general whose prospects foundered over her employment of an illegal alien as her children's nanny. There ensued a spate of revelations and micro-scandals about prosperous, prominent two-career couples who hadn't paid Social Security taxes on domestic employees, or who employed illegals, or otherwise cut corners or exploited immigrants working for them as domestic servants.

The Kirkpatricks (who were close friends of my parents) had always been a two-career couple. Kirk, as Jeane's husband Evron was known, was executive director of the American Political Science Association. Jeane told me once that as a young woman she hadn't expected to marry, so dedicated was she to the life of the mind. As a little girl, she spent one of her first dollars on a thesaurus. "So what happened," I asked. "You fell in love?" She put it differently: "Kirk fell in love with me."

Love and marriage and three sons in short order didn't derail her graduate studies in political science, but did slow them down. Jeane took till she was 40 to finish her Ph.D. and always managed her teaching and writing load so as to remain a hands-on mother.

Still, household help was needed to keep all these pieces in the air, and soon a single mother moved in to work as the Kirkpatricks' housekeeper, bringing with her her young son, Ricardo. The little boy played with the Kirkpatrick boys. Before long he was calling Kirk Daddy, and Jeane, who spoke good Spanish, was interpreting at his teacher conferences at school.

Jeane had high regard for Ricardo's mother, and made it a personal project to see that she learned English, then

that she took the necessary courses to get certified as a beautician so as to have the prospect of an independent home for herself and Ricardo. Over the years, this took a lot of encouragement, cajoling even, not to mention driving. But the scheme was successful. To Jeane, it was the obvious, normal thing for an American to do.

As for Jeane's public life, it was that 1979 essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards" that became the springboard for her hour upon the world stage, as Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations at the height of the Cold War. An anecdote she told me captures the magnitude of her achievement.

A few years after she left office, she went on a private trip to the Soviet Union with a group of prominent Americans, the likes of Henry Kissinger. They went to visit the eminent Soviet physicist and dissident Andrei Sakharov, who had recently been allowed to return to Moscow after his years of internal exile in Gorky. The group waited in the foyer of Sakharov's building.

When the great man appeared and approached, he asked, Where was "Kirkpatski"? Led to her, he took her hand and welcomed her and said, "I want you to know that your name is known in every cell in the gulag."

I visited Jeane only once in New York during her brilliant years at the U.N. We had lunch in her residence at the Waldorf, an omelette and fresh raspberries; then had a little time before the U.S. ambassador's annual Fourth of July reception. I realized I had forgotten a bag I had checked at the Metropolitan Museum earlier in the day and would have to go back to fetch it. Someone mentioned that the ambassador's car and driver were sitting downstairs. Perhaps they could go for the bag, or drive me? Jeane considered it for a second, then, no doubt imagining what her detractors in the press might make of such an injury to the public fisc, looked at me in a way that conveyed: It's not worth it. I took a cab.

Before my stay was over, Jeane showed me another of her perks of office: She was allowed to borrow paintings from the Metropolitan to hang in the official residence, and she took me into the bedroom to see her three gorgeous, turquoise Dufys. We sat on the bed and talked, and I noticed something else: her dressing table, with some snapshots stuck into the mirror frame. They were pictures of Douglas, John, Stuart—and Ricardo.

The last time I saw Ricardo, now a middle-aged married man, was a couple of months ago, after Douglas's sudden death. At the funeral, Ricardo was a pallbearer, alongside Stuart and John. No doubt I'll see him again in coming days as we all gather once more, this time to honor Jeane.

Claudia Anderson

CORBIS / Annie Griffiths Belt

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[A balanced energy approach]

As Americans talk about our energy future, the conversation naturally turns to the need for future supplies to sustain a growing American economy. The federal Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that even with a significant increase in energy efficiency and alternatives, Americans will still use 28 million barrels of oil a day in 2030 – a 34 percent increase from today.

Where will we get that oil? We need to have a balanced energy approach. We should look first here at home. The government estimates some 31 billion barrels of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil are available on federal lands currently closed to development. That's more than enough oil to power 35 million cars and heat 14 million homes for 30 years.

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Sandra D. or Snoop D.?

Regarding Robert Kagan and William Kristol's "A Perfect Failure" (Dec. 11): I wonder why no one in a position of authority, influence, or responsibility considered asking even one of the following to join the study group: William Kristol, Robert and Frederick W. Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Victor Davis Hanson, David Pryce-Jones, and Paul Johnson. And why were there no servicemen on the commission? It would have been wise to include some enlisted troops, both senior and junior, from the Army and Marine Corps, along with some officers and generals who have served two or more tours of duty in Iraq. They certainly would have devised far better recommendations than Iraq Study Group members Vernon Jordan, Leon Panetta, and Sandra Day O'Connor, who bring absolutely no relevant experience to a serious matter.

In fact, the United States would have been better off asking Paris Hilton, Snoop Dogg, and the Dixie Chicks to serve on the ISG. At least they would have brought some levity to the report, and, in the end, no one would have taken seriously what they said (except, perhaps, the *New York Times*). The president would have been able to get on with doing what needs to be done—that is, winning the war, helping the Iraqis to mold Iraq into a stable democracy, and showing the Islamofascists that we mean business and are not about to go away until we have finished the job.

I pray that we will have the strength and courage as a nation to win in Iraq. If we don't, we will ultimately have to fight battles not of our choosing on many other fronts. If we lose this one, we are finished as a nation, and the strength of our word will be as useless as several of the members of the ISG.

Richard Mastio
Carmel, Calif.

Firing Time

Though William J. Stuntz makes an important point that strategy may require a nation to raise its stakes even on what seems to be a bad hand, he misses a critical aspect of President Abraham Lincoln's execution of the Civil

War ("Doubling Down in Iraq," Nov. 20). During 1861, 1862, and much of 1863, tactical victories on the battlefield were discouragingly rare and often of minimal strategic value even when won. But when federal armies lost battles, Lincoln fired generals. Sometimes he even fired winning generals who failed to follow tactical victories with meaningful strategic advances. That crucible ruined the careers of dozens of honorable officers. But it gave Lincoln the generals—Grant and Sherman—who would win the war.

Stuntz says that the only way America can lose the war is to fold; he would have us "call and raise" now, but doubling down without drawing a new hand of Pentagon officials and general officers will drive us from the table just as surely and just as quickly as folding. First, find leaders who can win. Then raise the stakes to back them.

R. Scott Rogers
Alexandria, Va.

Papal-Back Novels

Brooke Allen's "A Burnt-Out Case" (Dec. 4) cites George Orwell's claim that Roman Catholics, except a few bad ones, cannot be good novelists. But who cannot see that Orwell's perspective is based on his agnostic views, which, naturally, are at odds with a Catholic vision of reality? In fact, I can name more than a few Catholics who were better novelists than Orwell. True, these Catholics have not been canonized, but so far as I know—allowing for the fact that I am not God—they were, or are, "good Catholics": namely, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, J.F. Powers, Francois Mauriac, Sigrid Undset, and Ron Hansen.

John Loranger
Sparks, Nev.

• • •

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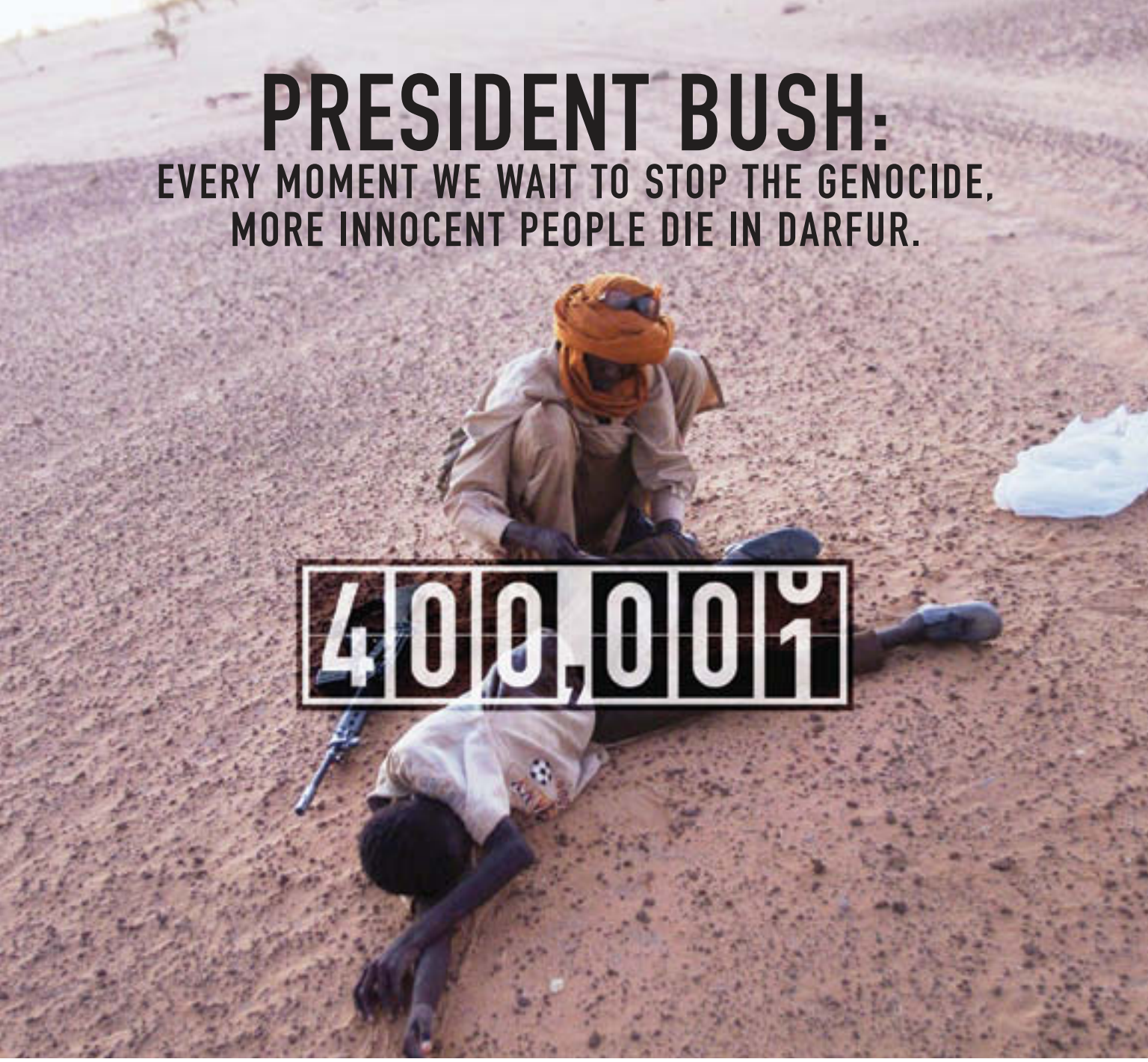

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the weekly Standard

It's Up To Bush

It's all up to the president now. The James Baker public relations blitz will of course continue, and the members of Baker's Iraq Study Group will go to book signings and be regulars on morning TV, and maybe even go on a nationwide tour like the Rolling Stones. Alan Simpson will continue to underline the gravity and earnestness of the group's endeavors by insisting that anyone who disagrees with him (like, say, John McCain and Joe Lieberman) has "gas" and "B.O."—subjects about which, unlike the military situation in Iraq, he probably has real knowledge and expertise.

But as the James Baker-Alan Simpson Steel Wheels tour and vaudeville act drags on and ultimately passes into well-deserved oblivion, the problems that they failed seriously to address will remain. And responsible people in Iraq, in the Pentagon, and in the White House will have to decide, very soon, how to achieve the president's goal of creating a stable, secure, and democratic Iraq. The president's military and political advisers are reviewing options now. Presumably, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is taking a fresh look at the situation in Iraq and is open to any strategy that has a chance of succeeding.

We worry, however, that little good may come out of these reviews unless the president takes a role in the deliberations and provides specific direction. The collective wisdom of the president's advisers for the past three years has not produced a strategy to achieve his goals. Bush rightly rebuked the Baker commission for calling for early withdrawal from Iraq before the mission was completed. But the Baker group's recommendations were little more than an endorsement of the failed strategies of the past three years. Train the Iraqis and pull out U.S. forces? That was Don Rumsfeld's and General John Abizaid's approach from the beginning. No one was more eager to get out of Iraq than Rumsfeld, but his unwillingness to commit enough troops early in the occupation and in the years that followed have actually had the effect of prolonging the American presence in Iraq, as well as putting us on a downward path toward failure.

From what we can tell about deliberations within the administration, we would expect many of Bush's current advisers to recommend continuing roughly along this failed path. Abizaid remains in place, and in his Senate testimony at least, Gates did not challenge Abizaid's assertion that no more troops are needed. As recently as June, the *New York Times*'s Michael Gordon reports, General George W. Casey Jr., the senior American commander in Iraq, came up with a plan to draw down American combat forces from 14 brigades to just 5, in the expectation that Iraqi forces would "pick up the slack." But, as Gordon reports, "no sooner did General Casey present his plan in Washington than it had to be deferred. With sectarian violence soaring in Baghdad, the United States reinforced its troops there." Nor was this a novel failure. In every year since the occupation began, senior military officials have set out plans to draw down American forces in the expectation that Iraqi troops would step in and fill the gap. And in every year, these plans have had to be abandoned. But Casey too is of course involved in the policy review.

And people and bureaucracies being what they are, it's not easy for them to change course, even when that course is obviously failing—unless they are instructed to take a different course by their commander in chief. The same people who brought us the current policy will likely recommend continuing it, albeit at a stepped-up pace. They will predictably focus on accelerating the training of Iraqi forces rather than on increasing the level of American combat forces sufficiently to do the job of securing Baghdad and other parts of Iraq as quickly as possible. It will be more of the same, only with a faster but, as in the past, unrealistic timeline. This could well be the last chance the administration has to turn things around in Iraq, but there is little sign yet that most of the president's advisers will propose the necessary dramatic shift.

That means the president will have to be, much more than he has been, his own general and strategist. He will have to decide on his own that incremental measures, such as stepping up the pace of Iraqi training, will not make enough of a difference in a short enough time to prevent a collapse of American policy and of Iraq itself.

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He will have to decide, contrary to the advice of many of his top advisers, that many more American troops need to be sent to Iraq, and as quickly as possible.

Of the many disappointments of the Iraq Study Group's report, none is greater than the failure (or was it unwillingness?) to offer any remotely plausible suggestions for bringing security and stability to significant parts of Iraq. The Baker group instead chose to entertain the fantasy that political reconciliation in Iraq can take place in the absence of basic security for the average Iraqi. But basic security for Iraqis is the prerequisite for any successful political reconciliation, because if the United States cannot provide protection to Iraqis, they have little choice but to turn to those who can, namely their own sectarian militias. People talk about what a power broker Moktada al-Sadr has become. But American policy made Sadr what he is today. First we failed to take him out of the game early on, when he posed less of a menace. Then our failure to protect the Shia from insurgent and terrorist attacks by al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgency all but guaranteed that many would turn to Sadr's army for such protection.

The Weekly Standard has been calling for a substantial increase in American forces in Iraq since the summer of 2003. More troops could have helped dramatically then, as almost everyone, including Gates in his Senate testimony, now agrees. Almost everyone now agrees more troops could have made a big difference in 2004 and 2005, too. And a rapid and substantial increase in American forces in Iraq remains key to solving our predicament today.

But isn't it too late? And are there troops to send?

No, it's not too late. And yes, the troops exist. We have addressed both these questions in recent weeks. Our colleague, Frederick W. Kagan, has written extensively in these pages and elsewhere on why 50,000 additional troops are needed in Iraq, what exactly they would do, and where they would come from. But you don't have to take our word for it.

General Jack Keane, the former Army vice chief of staff, who has traveled to Iraq frequently to meet commanders, has become an outspoken advocate for a substantial increase in American forces, especially in Baghdad. He has expressed disdain for those both inside and outside the Pentagon who claim that it is impossible to restore order there: "The notion that we can't provide protection for people in one of the capital cities of this world is just rubbish."

Keane is not alone. A few months ago, Army Maj. General Paul Eaton, who until his retirement had been in charge of building up the Iraqi Security Forces, told Senate Democrats what they didn't want to hear: that American force levels in Iraq were not nearly high enough, and that "we are, conservatively, 60,000 soldiers short." And the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that "most military officers . . . seem to believe that a pullback of U.S. forces would only trigger more violence and make political compromise in the country impossible. These officers argue that 20,000 U.S. troops are needed to bring order to Baghdad. Another 10,000 U.S. soldiers would also be needed" as advisers to the Iraqi army. As the *Journal* reports, the officers "bristle at the idea that it is too hard or impossible."

Then there is retired general Anthony C. Zinni, staunch opponent of the Iraq war, close friend of Colin Powell, and former head of the Central Command under Bill Clinton. General Zinni rejects the entire logic of both the Baker report and current administration strategy. As he recently told the *New York Times*, "There is a premise that the Iraqis are not doing enough now, that there is a capability that they have not employed or used. I am not so sure they are capable of stopping sectarian violence." Instead of taking troops out of Iraq, Zinni, according to the *Times*, believes that "it would make more sense to consider deploying additional American forces over the next six months to 'regain momentum' as part of a broader effort to stabilize Iraq that would create more jobs, foster political reconciliation and develop more effective Iraqi security forces."

Beyond these generals and other military officers, an increasing number of political leaders support an increase in force levels in Iraq. First and foremost has been Sen. John McCain, who has long called for an increase in troops to Iraq and continues to believe it is the only workable answer. He is joined by Senate Armed Services Committee members Joseph Lieberman, John Cornyn, and Lindsey Graham. A new addition to this camp is the incoming House Intelligence Committee chairman, Rep. Sylvestre Reyes. The man who will have about as big a role as anyone in reviewing the course of Iraq policy over the next two years has recently called for an increase in American forces in Iraq of 20,000 to 30,000 troops "for the specific purpose of making sure [Iraqi] militias are dismantled."

We understand that many people don't even want to think about such possibilities. We note that most of those who denounce these proposals as unworkable, impossible, and indeed unthinkable simply want to leave Iraq as quickly as possible and don't want to hear any nonsense about actually trying to succeed there. This was certainly true of the Baker commission. One adviser to the commission recently admitted that the panel never sought to present a plan that could succeed. Former ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chas W. Freeman candidly revealed to the *Washington Post* how Baker and his colleagues approached the problem of Iraq. "Very early on, the notion of achieving some sort of victory didn't take. So if victory is not possible and not feasible, even if you could define it, then what you're left with is to find some way to mitigate defeat." No surprise, then, that the com-

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mission did not come up with a plan that has any chance of producing success in Iraq.

President Bush, on the other hand, wants to succeed, and he has staked his presidency and his legacy for decades to come on the success of the Iraq mission. He has, after all, had many opportunities to give up on Iraq—notably, in the 2004 election year, and before this last round of congressional elections. He could have looked at various times for a "graceful exit." Last week he could have used this Baker commission, as so many people expected he would, to provide political cover for a retreat. Instead, President Bush has courageously stood firm.

Now he needs to display a different kind of courage. He has to take into his own hands the fate of Iraq and make his own decisions about what needs to be done. Of course, he should listen to all his advisers. But he must also know that his advisers, both civilian and military, have been failing him for the past three years. American policy, if it is to have any hope of turning the tide, must change dramatically in the next month or two. No one other than President Bush can make that change. No one other than the president can insist on policies that would save Iraq now. It is up to him to seize the moment. Indeed, the utter failure of the Iraq Study Group to propose a strategy that could work provides him a fresh opportunity to devise and implement a strategy that can.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

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A True American Hero

Jeane Kirkpatrick, 1926–2006.

BY NORMAN PODHORETZ

When I first met Jeane Kirkpatrick in 1972, she was an academic political scientist mainly interested in domestic politics. She was also a Democrat and a close associate of Hubert Humphrey who, both as a senator and as Lyndon Johnson's vice president, had been identified with the tradition of Cold War liberalism running from Truman to Kennedy and then enthusiastically embraced by President Johnson himself. But about ten years later, in 1980, she came out in support of Ronald Reagan against Jimmy Carter, and even went on to serve as one of Reagan's advisers during the campaign.

Soon thereafter, and thanks largely to an article entitled "Dictatorships and Double Standards" that she had written for *Commentary* in November 1979, Reagan appointed her his ambassador to the United Nations. There, following in the footsteps of Daniel Patrick Moynihan (another Democrat sent to the U.N. by a Republican president), she simultaneously scandalized and electrified the world by going on the offensive against the anti-Americanism which, then as now, was the default position in the malodorous sinkhole that the U.N. had become. Unlike Moynihan, however, who remained a Democrat, she finally joined the side she was on, becoming in due course a registered Republican. Yet even before she had formally switched parties, she was chosen to speak at the Republican National Convention in 1984, where she stole the show by denouncing the "San Francisco Democrats"—their convention that year had been in San Francisco—who "always blame America first."

She was, in other words, a neoconservative. And it may be worth noting in the context of all the nonsense that has been written in recent years about neoconservatism—some of it rooted in ignorance, some of it in malice, and most of it in both—that Jeane was not Jewish and that she had never been either a Straussian or a Trotskyite. What drove her out of the Democratic party was precisely the "blame-America-first" syndrome—the sour attitude toward America, and especially the barely disguised hostility to American military power—that had come to pervade Democratic attitudes in the late 1960s and that had persisted into the Carter administration. And what turned her from a devoted supporter of Hubert Humphrey into an even more devoted supporter of Ronald Reagan was Reagan's serene belief in America as a wondrous "city upon a hill" and his correlative determination to hasten the day when the "evil empire" would wind up on that very ash heap of history to which the Communists had always so confidently consigned us.

Jeane Kirkpatrick, then, was a veteran of World War III (or what is more generally known as the Cold War), and I would say of her what the English used to say of those veterans of World War II who had done important and interesting work and had come through unscathed—that she, like they, had had "a good war." And like them, too, she never really found anything afterward that engaged her intellectual energies and her political passions as fully as her own "good war" had done. Back in "civilian" life after the war had been won, she resumed her academic career, she served on many boards, and as a famous and esteemed public figure, she continued to write and to speak out whenever the spirit moved her (as, for example, in a prescient piece, also written for *Commentary*, describing "How the PLO Was Legitimized").

But it was never the same, especially after the death of her husband in 1995. Evron Kirkpatrick, longtime executive director of the American Political Science Association, had been Jeane's mentor, and throughout the forty years of their marriage he continued to be—to invert an old-fashioned term that seems singularly appropriate here—her helpmeet in all things. His death was an immeasurable loss to her—greater, I suspect, than anyone knew or could tell, thanks to the deep reserve that marked both her character and her personality.

Nor did the outbreak on 9/11 of what I persist in calling World War IV tempt her back into battle. She had serious reservations about the prudence of the Bush Doctrine, which she evidently saw neither as an analogue of the Truman Doctrine nor as a revival of the Reaganite spirit in foreign policy. Even so, she was clearly reluctant to join in the clamor against it, which for all practical purposes meant relegating herself to the sidelines.

Because, to my great regret, I saw very little of her in what would turn out to be the last five years of her life, I cannot say for certain that she was relieved to be out of the fray this time around, but I would guess that this was indeed the case. If so, she rested on the laurels she had earned in World War III. Having enlisted as a young woman, she went on to perform brilliant service on the ideological front, where she stood up magnificently for this country at a time when it was under a relentlessly vicious assault at home no less than abroad. It was as a hero of that war that she made her mark, and it is as a true American hero that she will be remembered.

She was also, not so incidentally, a great cook and a most loving friend. ♦

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Two, Three, Many Neoconservatives

Looking back at forty years of *The Public Interest*.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Princeton

No less an eminence than Meryl Streep was on campus here November 30 and December 1, when the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions hosted a conference on "*The Public Interest* and the Making of American Public Policy: 1965-2005." Oddly enough, however, the Academy Award-winning actress never made it to room 104 of the Computer Science building, where Madison Program director Robert George ably guided conference participants through panels on, among other things, "Social Policy and Urban Policy," "Neoconservatism and the American Commonwealth," and "Manners, Morals, and Modern America." Nor did Streep (busy lecturing on her career) choose to attend either of the conference's two dinners, where some of the nation's most distinguished intellectuals—(neo)conservative and (neo)liberal, Republican and Democrat—engaged in informal conversation and exchanged reminiscences of what had been, until it closed its doors in the spring of 2005, the premier political quarterly in America.

If Streep had stopped by, she would have experienced a conference that was less an assessment of *The Public Interest*'s legacy than an analysis of its contents and an investigation of its origins. Founded by Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell in 1965, *The Public Interest* is credited as the founding journal of neoconservatism—a label first applied to the politics of Kristol and others in the early seventies—and the home to a particular type of social science, one that applied rigorous empirical analysis to social programs with an eye toward improving them and ameliorating the sometimes negative consequences of government interventions.

To analyze and account for the contents of a 40-year-old enterprise—a timespan that, as political scientist James Ceaser pointed out, is roughly one-fifth the duration of the American republic—is no easy task. The conference organizers adopted a thematic approach. John J. DiIulio Jr. discussed crime policy, Lawrence Mead analyzed welfare reform, Harvey Mansfield lectured on the academy, and Irwin Stelzer delivered a presentation on the American corporation. Only one lecturer, William B. Allen of Michigan State University, a visiting fellow in the Madison Program who delivered an eye-opening and bracing talk on affirmative action, departed from a direct engagement with the *Public Interest* articles on his given topic.

If there was a drawback to this thematic approach, it was that it deemphasized the individuality and importance of some of the magazine's more influential and prolific contributors. One could easily imagine presentations on the *Public Interest* writings of Peter Drucker, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Robert M. Solow, Christopher Jencks, Leon Kass, James Q. Wilson, Charles Murray, Jude Wanniski, and others—not to mention Kristol, Bell, and Nathan Glazer, a founding contributor who replaced Bell as coeditor in 1973. When such names entered the conversation, they did so usually at odd angles. There were, as always, exceptions. These were notable and heartfelt. John DiIulio paid tribute to his mentor James Q. Wilson. William Bennett told stories of the ways in which Irving Kristol influenced his career. And Roger Scruton made sure to mention the influence and inspiration of Gertrude Himmelfarb, Irving's wife.

As one participant said, any magazine is simply a collection of articles and yet more than the sum of its parts. At Princeton, the intellectual disputes involved differing interpretations of what *The Public Interest* had been "all about," and of the curious life of the political persuasion with which it remains associated, neoconservatism. One of the more provocative analyses came from Ken Kersch, a professor at Princeton and occasional contributor to *The Public Interest* in its later years, who distinguished between what he called "Neoconservatism One" and "Neoconservatism Two."

In Kersch's view, Neoconservatism One was the animating spirit behind *The Public Interest*. It was nonideological, nonpartisan, skeptical, elitist, empirical, and focused exclusively on domestic affairs. Kersch's Neoconservatism Two is ideological, a creature of the Republican party, populist, skeptical of empiricism, dismissive of domestic policy, and primarily associated with certain currents in foreign policy that emphasize the uses of American power in the pursuit of American ideals. This transition in neoconservatism, Kersch implied, had been to the detriment of both *The Public Interest* and the public interest. It was a view echoed nonpolemically the next day by Nathan Glazer.

One of Kersch's interlocutors pointed out that the "broadening" or "popularization" of neoconservatism might also be considered a deepening of its approach to politics, as it encountered political realities and interacted with new forces in American life. When *The Public Interest* was founded, the religious right did not exist; as a political figure Ronald Reagan was known only for the speech he had delivered during the 1964 presidential campaign; and the biotechnology revolution, which would become a major preoccupation of the journal,

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had not yet occurred. And while they rejected "ideology," it is also clear the magazine's editors were interested in American constitutionalism and in the intellectual foundations of the American regime from the beginning. In the first issue (Fall 1965), for example, Martin Diamond, a student of Leo Strauss, contributes an article analyzing the then-dominant liberal and conservative approaches to the Constitution. He finds both lacking.

To caricature Kersch's caricature, one might say his analysis is that, as time went on, the neoconservatives and *The Public Interest* became less concerned with "facts" and more concerned with "values." But this, too, is not quite right. As early as 1966, Irving Kristol contributed an article predicting that, in the future, it would be culture and not economics that would dominate politics; American society would become an arena in which a clash between "old certainties" and the "new sophistication" took place. Later, in "Forty Good Years," his essay in the magazine's final issue, Kristol wrote that soon after founding their journal the editors of *The Public Interest* "discovered that behind the hard realities of economics and social science were the equally hard realities of morality, family, culture, and religion—the 'habits of the mind' and 'habits of the heart,' as Tocqueville said, that determine the quality and character of a people." One finds Nathan Glazer making a similar point in that same issue, in his essay "Neoconservative from the Start": "We began to realize that our successes in shaping a better and more harmonious society, if there were to be any, were more dependent on a fund of traditional orientations, 'values,' or, if you will, 'virtues,' than any social science or 'social engineering' approach." The truth is that there probably has been more consistency in neoconservatism—skeptical, empirical, meliorist, and moralist (understood as an abiding interest in, and concern for, the moral underpinnings of society)—than not.

And this includes foreign policy. Technically, in the interests of editorial peace, *The Public Interest* focused exclusively on questions of domestic policy. "Vietnam was arousing a storm of controversy at the time" the magazine began, Kristol wrote in 2005, "and we knew that our group had a wide spectrum of opinion on the issue. We did not want any of the space in our modest-sized quarterly to be swallowed up by Vietnam. The simplest solution was to ban foreign affairs and foreign policy from our pages." And yet, rereading *The Public Interest*, one is

My 'Public Interest'

*These remarks were prepared by Irving Kristol for a conference held November 30–December 1 by Princeton University's James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, "*The Public Interest *and the Making of American Public Policy: 1965-2005."*

I was, of course, immensely pleased to receive your invitation to a conference on *The Public Interest*. I am unable to attend, alas—though on second thought, perhaps it's just as well; that magazine no longer belongs to those who founded it, edited it, and wrote for it over its 40 years' existence. It belongs to a subsequent generation who will make of it what they will. But the invitation provoked me to think anew about the magazine and my own relation to it. These thoughts are not memories so much as a reconstruction of my state of mind in the 1950s and 1960s, an account that, I must admit, is perhaps teleological as well as chronological.

I came to *The Public Interest* from a rather different background from my fellow editors, and with a vision that did not always fit comfortably with theirs. Fortunately, because *The Public Interest*, for good reasons, focused exclusively on domestic policy, this was only intermittently a source of mild irritation.

In the 1950s we were living in London, where I was co-editing *Encounter* magazine. There, by the way, is another journal that deserves a conference of its own, though in London. But this won't happen because it would require the Brits to face up to the fact that, half a century ago, the CIA put out a better British magazine than the Brits have ever done since.

Anyway, I was happy to be in London—it was easy to be happy in London in those days—but I was also increasingly restless. Britain, and by extension Europe, had its charms, but it was clear that the United States, in all its gracelessness, was where the future of the West would be determined. Our NATO allies were turning in on themselves. This was accompanied by an increasing anti-Americanism, a recognition of the fact that we were pushing them into the world while their strong inclination was to stay at home and nurse the wounds that two world wars had inflicted. And as their national politics focused on one universal welfare program after another, the trivialization of European politics proceeded apace, regardless of which political party was in office. When it came to budgeting priorities, they were all social democrats now. World War I had ended with the famous promise of returning soldiers to "a world fit for heroes." It is only a slight exaggeration to say that World War II ended with a commitment to "a world fit for victims."

I knew there was an important lesson for the United States in this development. There was clearly a growing American opinion that believed a European-type welfare state was the correct and inevitable model for the United States. Against this, there was a party on the right with a radical individualist ethos that opposed the very idea of a welfare state. As a child of the Great Depression, I found this attitude preposterous. Could there not be another option—a welfare state that could be reconciled with a world role for the United States? It was with this question in mind that, in 1958, I returned home.

In the 1960s, while pursuing a career in book publishing, I began to write an occasional brief column for

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struck that foreign affairs are never far off its radar screen. Certainly the magazine existed in a world where questions of foreign policy were dominant. The journal began during the Vietnam war. The 1972 election, in which Kristol voted for Richard Nixon and Bell voted for George McGovern, was a foreign policy election. And *The Public Interest* closed its doors a little more than three years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the inauguration of a new era in American politics.

In fact, in remarks sent to the conference (reprinted below), Kristol links—in a narrative he says is "perhaps teleological"—*The Public Interest*'s vision of the welfare state to a vision of America as a global power. When he and Daniel Bell founded the magazine, Kristol writes, "there was clearly a growing American opinion that believed a European type welfare state was the correct and inevitable model for the United States." He continues: "Against this, there was a party on the right with a radical individualist ethos that opposed the very idea of a welfare state. . . . Could there not be another option—a welfare state that could be reconciled with a world role for the United States?" In Kristol's view, there was such an option. *The Public Interest*'s "work in economic and social policy" would be closely tied to "our national destiny as a world power."

Indeed, it is possible to identify moments when foreign affairs enters *The Public Interest*'s pages. As early as the magazine's fifth issue, the editors published two articles under the heading "Reforming the Draft." Two issues later, in an essay entitled "Crisis of Confidence," Daniel Patrick Moynihan drew a direct relationship between failures in the war in Vietnam and failures in the War on Poverty. Two issues after *that*, there is another article on the draft. Later, Zbigniew Brzezinski would publish an article on "Purpose and Planning in Foreign Policy." Morris Janowitz would publish "Toward an All-Volunteer Military." Eliot A. Cohen, Samuel Huntington, and others would contribute pieces to a special issue (one of two) on "America's Defense Dilemmas." Nathan Tarcov would examine the foreign policy of America's founding. L. Gordon Crovitz would write on Congress's imperial mismanagement of foreign affairs. And—much later—Fred Baumann would articulate his views on America's post-Saddam foreign policy debate. One could also argue that the many articles published on immigration policy, energy policy, trade policy, global demographics, and intelligence

the *New Leader*, a weekly magazine with a minuscule circulation to which I had contributed over the years. There was quite enough being written about Vietnam, so most of my columns concerned Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" and were coolly critical of its strong ideological coloration, so reminiscent of European social democracy. Not myself an economist or sociologist, I was in no position to argue my views in detail. I very much needed the company of like-minded scholars.

In 1965, through a series of circumstances that need not be recounted here, the stars became properly aligned so that my wish could become a reality. Dan Bell and I were able to start a new magazine devoted exclusively to domestic social and economic policy. We brazenly called it *The Public Interest*, and in our opening statement declared it to be nonideological. We ourselves were rather unclear as to what we meant by that, but it soon became clear enough through the efforts of our contributors. It meant the proper, rigorous use of social-science methodology. In the feverish years of the 1960s, when what so often passed for social science was imbued with a sometimes apocalyptic, sometimes eschatological, but always political impulse, this very modest approach was refreshing. The result was a magazine with a distinctive tone that defined its identity for the next 40 years. To critics who thought this tone was distinctly conservative, I am tempted to quote Margaret Thatcher: "The facts of life are conservative."

That our magazine was able to produce and publicize first-rate scholarly work reveals that the American academic community, ideological as it had become, nevertheless to some degree continued to respect old-fashioned academic standards. Will it last? That's not for me to say. What I can say is that my years at *The Public Interest* permitted me to observe how the idea of "national greatness" can be consistent with a welfare state that does not frustrate the spirit of enterprise and that does not instill risk-aversiveness as a universal virtue.

We have seen in the case of Europe how a social democratic welfare state discourages population growth as well as economic growth, and suppresses the virtues traditionally associated with "manliness" in foreign policy. Europe is now paying a terrible price, to the point where it is in the process of losing its historic identity, because of the sovereignty it has accorded the social democratic ethos over both domestic and foreign policy. That the two are inseparably intertwined has never been more convincingly demonstrated.

True, the American version of "national greatness" has recently run into some local difficulties out there in the Middle East, and I suppose that the idea itself will be muted for some time ahead. But I note that the American population has just reached 300 million, with 400 million pretty firmly projected for 2040. So my grandchildren will be living in a country with the world's third largest population, the strongest economy, and the most powerful military establishment. Our critics may demand ever-greater humility from our ever-greater power; that would be a historic first were it ever to happen. So, for better or worse, "national greatness" is being thrust upon us.

I realize that my *Public Interest*, linking its work in economic and social policy to our national destiny as a world power, is a special interpretation that others will find questionable. But I trust that expanding the role of *The Public Interest* as I have done will surely not diminish its historic significance.

—*Irving Kristol*

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bureaucracies were all additional examples of "foreign policy" sticking its foot in *The Public Interest*'s door.

There was another way in which the link between the domestic and foreign visions of neoconservatism was manifest in *The Public Interest*. The editors published many articles on comparative politics. There were articles examining differing approaches to social welfare programs among the Western democracies; comparing the economic systems of the United Kingdom, Japan, and Sweden; reporting on the global nature of the student revolt in the 1960s. At another level of abstraction, *The Public Interest* was home to a vibrant debate on American exceptionalism. Daniel Bell published his "End of American Exceptionalism" in 1975, in a special issue devoted to the "American Commonwealth," and followed it up with further thoughts on the topic in the spring of 1989. And when an author reflected on the nature of American democracy, or compared America's welfare systems with those of other rich democracies, value judgments were never far off. Looking over his back issues in 2005, Nathan Glazer would write, "I . . . am happy to see a few articles in defense of the more developed welfare states of Europe, which to my mind have created a better society than we have in the United States."

It is doubtful most of the editors and contributors to *The Public Interest* share this particular judgment. Irving Kristol certainly does not. Yet Glazer's comment ought to be considered in light of Kristol's remarks on his *Public Interest*. Both statements serve as a reminder that the editors—and the contributors they published—while tending to share similar approaches to the world, held divergent views on a variety of subjects. Both statements suggest that in the interstices of the magazine's social science articles were deeply held opinions on the nature of the world and how America both shapes and is shaped by that world. And both provoke reflection on the fact that domestic and global politics are more interdependent—as they say—than we might otherwise imagine. ♦

Baker à la Carte

How Bush will pick and choose from the 79 varieties of recommendation. BY FRED BARNES

President Bush won his first skirmish with the Iraq Study Group. James A. Baker III and Lee Hamilton, the ISG directors, insisted the president adopt all 79 of its recommendations for changing policy in Iraq. Bush balked, and for good reason. A sizable chunk of the ISG's advice—its call, for instance, for a new diplomatic outreach to Syria and Iran—is unrealistic and wrongheaded. Within 24 hours of the report's release, Hamilton conceded he and Baker had never expected full compliance by Bush.

It was, however, a small triumph. The president faces significant hurdles in his effort to finesse the ISG report and the get-out-of-Iraq-now Democrats. Bush's plan is twofold. First, while praising the ISG report, he's already begun rejecting parts he doesn't like, while other parts he'll probably just ignore. Second, to quell Democratic (and media) opposition, he'll invoke the ISG's plea for bipartisanship and its support for "success" in Iraq.

Bush would no doubt have preferred to dismiss the report flatly, perhaps even contemptuously. He came to Washington six years ago with a strong desire to thumb his nose at the mandarins of the Washington establishment. And the ISG is a perfect embodiment of that establishment both in who's on it and the type of advice it's offering. But given his political weakness and the unpopularity of the war in Iraq, Bush doesn't have the option of snubbing the ISG.

Still, the private scorn among Bush aides for the ISG was hard to disguise. One administration official said a line in Eliot Cohen's analysis of the ISG report in the *Wall Street Journal* captured his view. "A fatuous process yields, necessarily, fatuous results," wrote Cohen, a military expert at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

Fatuous or not, the ISG's recommendations were typical of Washington's elite class of former officials. The ISG's ten members showed a utopian faith in diplomacy and negotiations, plus a fondness for regional conferences, especially dealing with the Middle East. They suggested, subtly but surely, that the Israeli-Palestinian problem is somehow relevant to fixing what's wrong in Iraq and should be dealt with as one of the first orders of business. And, as Washington elites always do, they favored bipartisanship and a consensus approach. In fact, ISG members were downright self-congratulatory in talking about how well they got along with each other, in contrast to the partisanship that otherwise prevails in Washington.

The conceit of the panel was that Washington's wise men would bail out an unsophisticated president from the consequences of his reckless intervention in Iraq that many of them, Baker included, opposed from the start. A further conceit was that a collection of old Washington hands, regardless of their specific qualifications, invariably knows better.

In a sense, the ISG report was payback. The group embraced the conventional wisdom in Washington that Bush has so often rebelled against. The emphasis of his foreign and

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national security policy on spreading democracy clashed with the establishment's yearning for stability. Thus it's not surprising the ISG report never cites "democracy" as a goal. But "stability" or a "stable" Iraq as an objective is cited more than 30 times.

And while the ISG endorsed an Iraq that can govern and defend itself and join the international war on terror, it failed to provide a strategy for achieving that goal. The ISG was far more interested in pointing the way for a withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

A telling difference between the president and the ISG involves "victory" as the chief aim in Iraq. At a press conference last week with British prime minister Tony Blair, Bush said he and Blair "agree that victory in Iraq is important. It's important for the Iraqi people. It's important for the security of the United States and Great Britain, and it's important for the civilized world."

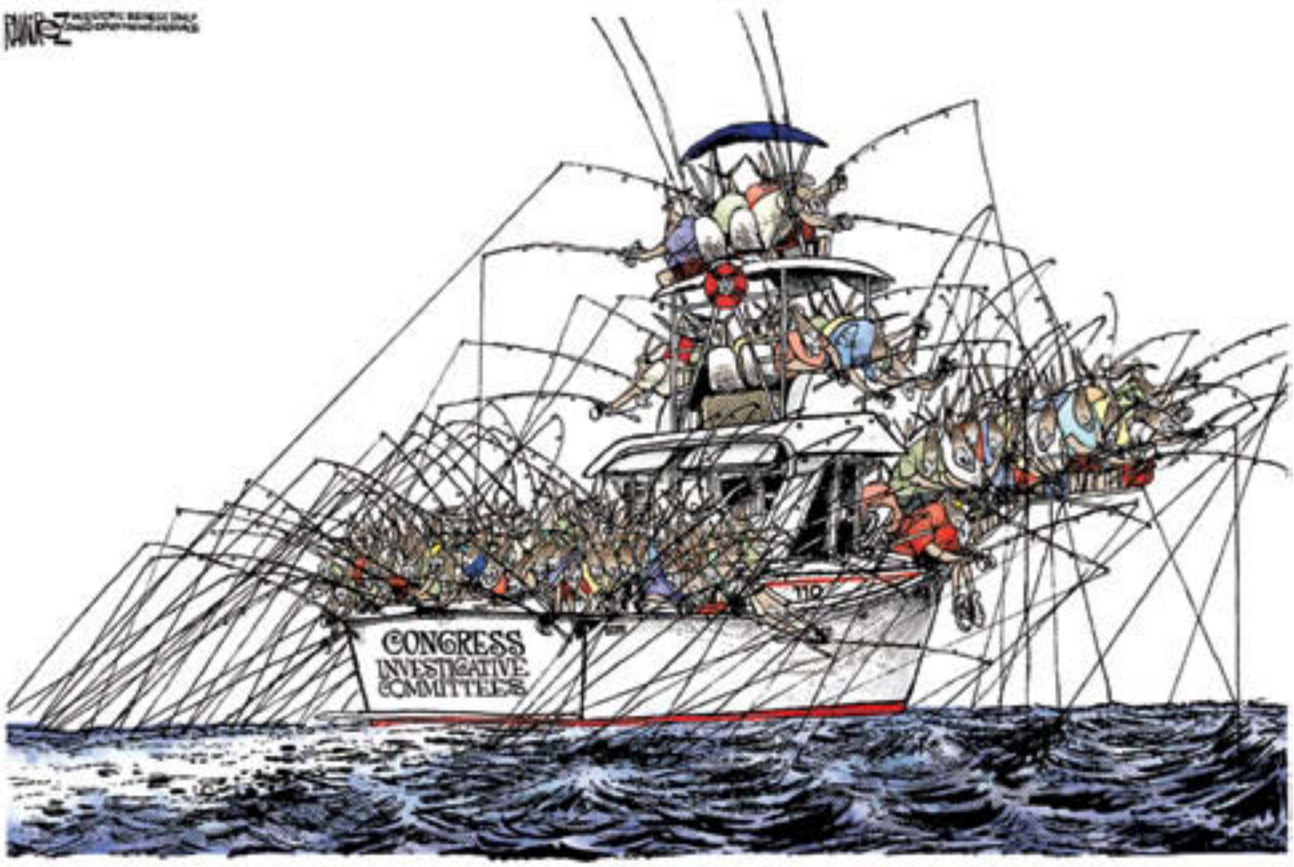
According to the *Washington Post*, "victory in Iraq" was initially one of four options that the ISG would explore. But it was quickly abandoned as a topic worth examining. And the word victory itself did not appear in the report except in reference to a possible al Qaeda victory.

Baker explained the absence of the word this way: "We stayed away from a lot of terms that have been bandied about during the campaign season and the political debate. You probably won't find 'civil war' in here either. You won't find 'victory.' But you will find 'success.' And so I think what our report says, on balance, if you read it, is that if you implement the recommendations we make, the chances for success in Iraq will be improved."

The difference between success and victory is more than symbolic. Success is a flexible term. It could mean diminished violence or an undemocratic takeover of the Iraqi government by a strongman or a military leader or almost anything but a total takeover by terrorists and jihadists. Victory is far less equivocal. It means, in Iraq, the defeat of terrorists and antidemocratic forces.

The trickiest part of Bush's plan is getting Democrats to live up to their promise to be bipartisan. After congressional leaders met with Bush last week, Senate Democratic whip Dick Durbin of Illinois said withdrawing troops from Iraq has to be the top priority. "We have got to start moving American troops, redeploying them out of Iraq, and start bringing them home," he said. That's not the path to victory or success—or to bipartisanship.

Next week Bush intends to address the nation with "a new approach" in Iraq. He'll invoke the Iraq Study Group and accept many of its recommendations. He may approve a temporary increase in troops in Iraq, a step mentioned but not specifically endorsed by the ISG. Will this cause Durbin and antiwar Democrats to desist? Don't hold your breath. ♦



Michael Ramirez

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Radio Free Iran

Down with music. Up with ideas.

BY S. ENDERS WIMBUSH

Iran looms intractable on America's radar, while the Bush administration casts about for nonmilitary weapons to use against it. Although President Bush insists that we are in a war of ideas with Iran, he has yet to unlimber some of America's most potent instruments to fight it. Chief among these should be the Persian-language broadcasts of Radio Farda. But, like most of America's international broadcasters, the station has fallen into the public diplomacy trap of advocating for America rather than stimulating debate within the targeted society.

Originally intended by Congress to operate as Radio Free Iran, the station was abruptly morphed into Radio Farda ("Tomorrow" in Persian) in 2002. It now broadcasts chiefly music and American popular culture aimed at Iran's kids. Mostly gone is the "ideas" menu—history, culture, religion, economics, law, human rights, labor, business, critical thinking—employed to great effect during the Cold War by its parent organization, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, whose intended listeners were critical elites and the populations that supported them.

To become an effective instrument in the war of ideas, Radio Farda should be completely overhauled, not just tinkered with. Six strategies are required, all of them based on proven RFE/RL choices and methods.

Strategy One: Question the regime's legitimacy. Iran's noxious regime will survive so long as it retains legitimacy among those most likely to seek to change it. America's communications strategy should chip away at this legitimacy by describing and analyzing the nature of the regime from many angles.

It would contest the regime's claim to Islamic legitimacy. Direct involvement in politics by Islamic clerics has traditionally been frowned upon in Iran, a point made frequently by many Iranian theologians and ayatollahs.

Half a million college graduates join the ranks of the unemployed each year. These people don't need popular music. They need, and want, powerful ideas for change.

It would discredit the clerics as sources of moral authority. Pervasive corruption at all levels of government is public knowledge, and it is increasingly associated with the ruling clerical establishment in the mind of the public.

And a sound strategy would rebut the regime's anti-Westernism, which is intensifying as a source of its legitimacy. It would emphasize the great historical attachments of Iran to the West and, particularly, the mutual, and mutually beneficial, interpenetration of Persian and Western culture. The aim must be to deny traction to anti-Westernizing influences.

Strategy Two: Highlight the leadership's disunity. Iran's regime is at its strongest when its leaders are united. A targeted communications strategy would highlight disagreements among leaders that we know to exist, underlining divisions, straining friendships, and endangering alliances. It would give special attention to those who break ranks. (Boris Yeltsin acknowledged that his rise to power in the crumbling Soviet Union was due in large part to Radio Liberty's intensive reporting of his activities.) The strategy would focus on revealing controversies that may not exist openly but that are endemic to the regime's view of the world and the policies by which it articulates its vision.

Strategy Three: Highlight threats to Iran's culture. For Iranians of most stripes, the sanctity and salience of their historic culture, and its preeminence among world cultures, is of high importance. A successful communications strategy would describe how this preeminence is endangered and in decline. Examples of mediocre cultural products (in literature, music, poetry, art, films), made more mediocre by Iran's isolation from the rest of the world and the intellectual straitjacket enforced by the regime, could be discussed to make a powerful point: Iran's historic culture is deteriorating in Iran itself, with the only advances taking place outside the mother country.

During the Cold War, Radio Liberty's strategy of stressing the gains of Russian culture outside Russia—for example through movie reviews and readings by noted authors in exile—had a sobering impact on its listeners. Iran, where virtually everything is viewed through the prism of culture, is an even more resonant milieu for such a strategy.

Strategy Four: Describe Iran's isolation, economic decline, and growing lack of competitiveness. A targeted communications strategy should draw attention constantly to the economic and social costs of Iran's isolation from the world. It would emphasize that Iran is embarking on a catastrophe in science and technology, partly because of isolation but also because the educational system no longer supports such pur-

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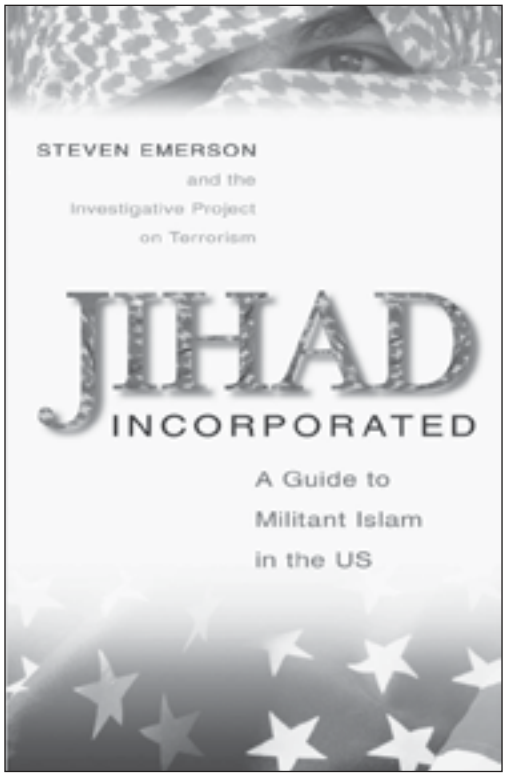
suits. It would make the case that Iran is missing out on globalization. Take away Iran's oil (which accounts for 90 percent of exports) and you have a failed state. As much as 50 percent of the rural population and 20 percent of the urban population live below the poverty line. This places Iran in competition with Pakistan (34 percent poverty rate) for the distinction of being the poorest country in Asia.

An effective communications strategy would take aim at failing "Islamic economics" that is dragging Iranians away from the globalization sweeping the rest of the world. It would point out that for Iranians poverty and demography are converging. Unemployment among the young averages 35 percent. Things are especially dire for Iran's young women, who suffer an unemployment rate of 50 percent, despite being easily the best educated in the Middle East. The prospects of the massive youth cohort are not bright, and they know it. Moreover, with half a million college graduates joining the ranks of the unemployed each year, things are getting worse, even without the palpable political alienation of this key demographic. These people don't need popular music. They need, and want, powerful ideas for change.

Strategy Five: Build critical/pragmatic thinking. Islamic education is inflicting a knockout punch on critical thinking skills. This is happening in most parts of the Islamic world, including Iran, where Islamic precepts permeate every level of the educational system, including the hard sciences. A communications strategy would focus on generating and strengthening pragmatic thinking and decision-making throughout the population, but especially among young people. To this end, the strategy would emphasize programs and topics that instill listeners with ways of thinking about problems that the regime currently proscribes or for which it insists on "Islamic solutions."

Strategy Six: Empower alternative power centers with new ideas. Like all complex states, Iran has a number of real and potential power centers—regional, labor, ethnic, professional, institutional, military, even religious. A focused communications strategy would aim to challenge the regime's ability to suffocate these centers in its ideological embrace. A successful strategy would provide the ideas to encourage potential power centers and leaders to develop stronger profiles, advance unique demands, and compete for power. The Eastern European and Soviet cases are instructive in this regard—think of the free trade union, Solidarity. None of the Soviet-bloc regimes proved able to survive even modestly persistent challenges from alternative power centers.

President Bush has incessantly asserted that fighting the war of ideas is his top priority, but he seems not to understand that public diplomacy, which aims to make people like America, is not the solution. It's time he got serious about the war of ideas and unleashed Radio Farda. ♦



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The Caracas Macaca

Hugo's messianic leftism wins another round.

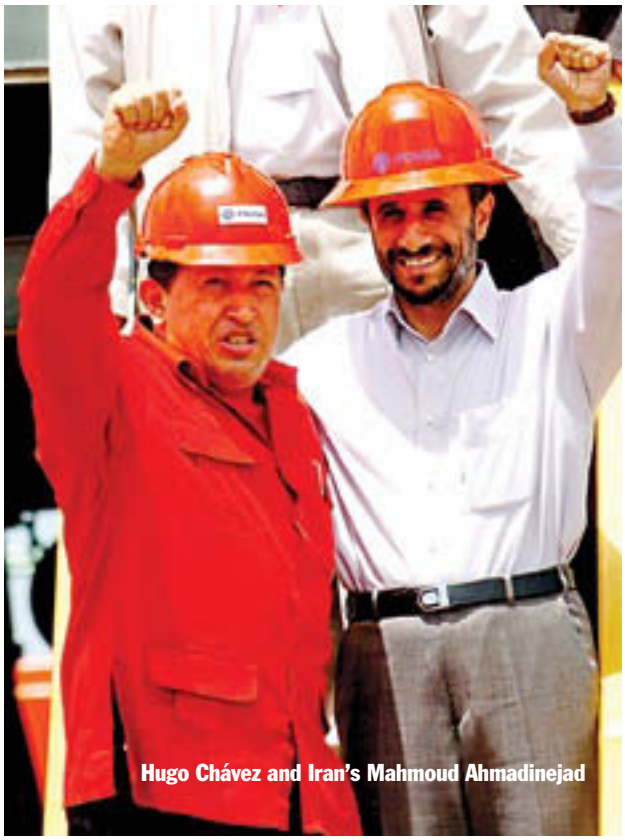
BY AARON MANNES

Having won an overwhelming reelection victory, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez—who famously called President Bush the devil in an address to the United Nations—now has a free hand to pursue his revolutionary ambitions. His victory also presents the United States with an important opportunity to reengage with Latin America.

The opposition actually thought they might win this election—but that if they did the Chavistas would resort to electoral fraud. Although there were irregularities on Election Day, international monitors certified the election as conducted lawfully. The European Union's Electoral Observation Mission noted that Chávez had mobilized state institutions for his reelection campaign. Using public funds, Chávez outspent the opposition twelve to one. Campaign materials were posted at public facilities and on public vehicles, and public employees were pressured to support the president. The opposition candidate, Manuel Rosales, conceded on Election Night, having received about 38 percent of the vote.

Aaron Mannes, author of the TerrorBlog, www.profilesinterror.com, *researches terrorism and international affairs at the University of Maryland's Information and Network Dynamics Laboratory. Opinions expressed here are his own.*

In retrospect, Chávez's victory should not have come as a surprise. A major oil producer, Venezuela has a booming economy. Chávez is a charismatic figure who has engaged Venezuela's poor and developed high-profile aid programs. The efficacy of these programs at reducing poverty is an open question. The 2006 U.N. Development Program report shows that poverty reduction in Venezuela has been modest, and Chávez's government has constructed fewer units of public housing than the previous administration, which governed during a prolonged recession. Crime has skyrocketed under Chávez (Venezuela has one of the world's highest homicide rates), state institutions have been politicized, and government has increasingly encroached on freedom of the press and judicial independence. But the middle classes are prospering, and Chávez has avoided overly antagonizing the wealthy.



Hugo Chávez and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

epa / CORBIS / Chico Sanchez

Chávez interprets his victory as a mandate to enact his grand design. "Nobody will take me out of the path to socialism," he promises, "and particularly not now, when I won over seven million votes." Chávez's rhetoric is messianic: He frequently claims his revolution is building the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. His most recent vision is to do away with money and establish the barter system. To see his project through, Chávez is planning to campaign to change the constitution so that he can be reelected for several more terms and remain in office until 2021.

His ambitions extend beyond Venezuela. In August he told Al Jazeera that the way to the Kingdom of Heaven is via a multipolar world. To this end, Chávez is funding ideological allies in Latin America and has founded Telesur, a Spanish language satellite channel modeled on Al Jazeera that has been broadcasting since July 2005. More ominously, he is purchasing military hardware, including Russian fighters and helicopters. There are persistent reports that the narcoterrorist guerilla group FARC is granted safe haven in western Venezuela. On the world stage, Chávez has forged an alliance with Iran and Syria.

As long as oil prices are high, Chávez is free to pursue his ambitions (in OPEC he leads the call for production cuts). But he has done little to develop alternative industries, so when prices fall Chávez's revolution

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will be unsustainable. In the meantime, it is essential the international community keep the spotlight on Venezuela's democracy to ensure that democratic processes remain viable.

Unfortunately, American criticism only plays into Chávez's hands, and many in Latin America bristle at U.S. involvement in their nations' internal affairs. Latin America must begin to monitor itself. The United States can encourage this by reengaging with Latin America, which it has long relegated to the foreign policy back burner. The United States should press forward on free trade and expand development aid, military cooperation, and exchange programs with the region. Currently USAID programs to Latin America total less than $1 billion annually, while the National Endowment for Democracy funds democracy-promotion efforts there to the tune of less than $15 million annually. Meanwhile Cuban doctors, funded by Chávez, are dispensing free medical treatment in the slums of Caracas and throughout the Andes.

If the United States builds relationships in Latin America, it may find some surprising allies against Chávez. While Chávez-type candidates won recent elections in Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia, his radicalism frightens many in the region. Association with Chávez contributed to the defeat of candidates in Peru and Mexico.

Chávez has had high-profile spats with the governments of Mexico, Colombia, and Peru. Even Brazil and Argentina, which are governed by Chávez allies, have had trouble with him. Bolivia, with Chávez's support, is raising natural gas prices—causing headaches in Argentina and Brazil. However, if the United States does not build bridges to the region, Chávez's rhetoric and petrodollars will fill the vacuum.

Flush with oil money and a strong electoral victory, Chávez is riding high, his influence rising. For the United States, this is a wake-up call. Unless we reengage with Latin America, we may find ourselves in a region full of Hugos. ♦

The Health of the States

The real lesson of the Romney health care plan.

BY JAMES C. CAPRETTA AND YUVAL LEVIN

In early 2006, Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney gained national attention by negotiating a plan with the Democratic state legislature to pursue universal health insurance coverage in his state.

Romney's scheme is easily the most ambitious health care reform effort since the failed Clinton plan of 1993-94. It requires all Massachusetts residents to sign up for coverage by July 2007 or face a penalty, and to make it easier to get coverage it creates an insurance marketplace where individuals or small business employees can get private insurance at large group rates. Workers getting their coverage through this "Connector" will also get the same substantial federal tax advantages that employees of large firms get today. The plan includes new subsidies to help cover the insurance premiums of residents with incomes under 300 percent of the federal poverty rate. Medicaid funds currently used to reimburse health care providers for uncompensated care for the uninsured will be redirected to the new premium assistance program, beginning the process of turning Medicaid dollars into vouchers for private insurance.

Reaction to the Romney plan among conservatives has been mixed. Some have welcomed the idea as a first step toward a free-market approach to expanded coverage, and the Connector in particular as a move toward private health insurance portability. Large numbers of Americans go for relatively short periods without coverage because they move through different low wage jobs, often with small employers, and often with spells of unemployment as well. The Connector aims to solve this problem by allowing many more workers to keep the same insurance plan even as they change or lose jobs.

Other conservatives, however, worry that Massachusetts has left in place a heavy regulatory structure for insurance, burdened with numerous state-mandated benefits that make coverage needlessly expensive. There is no good reason, for instance, to require every single insurance plan in the state to cover dental care and in vitro fertilization. Some also think the Connector will eventually need to control state costs by setting prices, at the expense of consumer choice. And the plan's so-called "employer mandate"—a demand of the Democratic legislature—requires employers to contribute to the cost of their workers' coverage or face a penalty, which can discourage hiring and come at the expense of wages, not profits.

But all this commentary on the details has tended to miss the larger meaning of the Romney plan for the health care debate. Rather than a model for other states to copy in its every detail, the Romney approach is most notable as an example of health care federalism—that is, of a state-level response to the larger problem of the uninsured.

Since at least the early '90s, the health care debate has involved

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competing visions of federal policy. Republicans have fought for Health Savings Accounts, to slow rising costs by introducing market mechanisms. Democrats have pushed for a federally funded State Children's Health Insurance Program, which has added more public subsidies for children in low-income families.

But given how much of the regulation and funding of health care occurs at the state level, there has been a dearth of attention to health care solutions that take federalism seriously. Conservatives, for the most part, have disparaged the state-by-state regulation of the health insurance market, arguing (correctly) that allowing insurance to be sold across state lines could create a larger and more efficient market. Last year, the Senate fell just five votes shy of passing legislation sponsored by Wyoming Republican Mike Enzi that would in essence have federalized the regulation of health insurance. Done right, an escape valve from oppressive state regulation would be helpful. But the political obstacles to passage of an approach that truly gets it right (especially in the wake of this year's election) should point us to the states.

The need to stabilize and expand private coverage for low wage workers and those working for small businesses can be dealt with by states and would benefit from state-level experimentation. State efforts are also the most plausible means, for now, of advancing the cause of health insurance portability—a key concern for many families. The federal government can best play its part by enabling such experimentation.

It remains to be seen if the Massachusetts experiment will succeed; but even if it works, not every state will want to try it. The plan responds to a widely shared problem but in a way that builds on the state's unique circumstances: a fairly positive budget, relatively few uninsured, an existing uncompensated care fund, and similar rating and benefit rules for the small group and individual insurance markets, among other factors. Other states, in other circumstances, may want to take different kinds of steps.

Indeed, other states are experimenting, too. In Florida, for instance, outgoing governor Jeb Bush has launched a Medicaid reform under which beneficiaries will get vouchers, with the amounts adjusted based on health risk factors, which they can use to buy private coverage from state-approved plans. The proposal is a radical departure from the traditional fee-for-service approach to Medicaid, injecting much-needed competition into the program, and giving the state more direct control over its Medicaid budget.

Because the Medicaid program is mostly run by the states but largely funded by the federal government, states seeking to innovate almost always need federal approval for their plans. Massachusetts and Florida both sought and received extensive federal Medicaid waivers. The most constructive role the federal government can play in helping provide greater and more stable and portable access to private insurance in the coming years would be to extend such waivers more broadly, or, through legislation, to remove the need for waivers altogether.

Some states may well implement bad health care reforms, of course. But part of the genius of the federal structure—as conservatives used to know—is that at least a bad state idea will be limited in application, and will provide a cautionary model to others. That is not the case with ill-advised federal laws.

Since no broader reform of the system seems plausible in any case in an era of divided government, such standing waivers or legislative reforms should be the focus of the federal approach, at least for now. Massachusetts has stepped up to address its health care problems its own way. In the coming years, the prospects for broader access to private health insurance, as opposed to a government takeover of the health care sector, rest on other states' taking the initiative as well. The federal government should get out of their way. ♦

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Warriors for Hire

Blackwater USA and the rise of private military contractors

By Mark Hemingway

Moyock, N.C.

For obvious reasons, the location of the headquarters of Blackwater USA isn't well-publicized. Officially, the only public trace of the world's largest private military training facility is a post office box in Moyock, North Carolina, an unremarkable rib-shack pit-stop on the way to the Outer Banks.

But the place isn't hard to find. From Washington, D.C., head south. As soon as you cross the state line, follow the sound of gunfire until you find an armed compound half the size of Manhattan. Which is not to say the place sticks out—it's just very, very big. Blackwater is a company most Americans first heard of when four of its contractors were murdered in Falluja, Iraq, in March 2004, and their bodies desecrated on camera. It is the most prominent of the private security contractors in Iraq. You might think of the North Carolina facility as Blackwater's Fort Benning or Quantico.

Still largely subsumed by the swampland it occupies, the compound is mostly au naturel except for odd aircraft lying around. The company name sounds mysterious, but it's just the name of the region. If you dig a few feet underground, the hole will quickly fill with the thick, dark peat water just under the surface. The only building of any real size houses the company's brand new 60,000-square-foot corporate offices, a low profile building with a massive stone entryway that blends into the surroundings nicely. (The massive double-door handles made from .50 caliber machine gun barrels get noticed, however.) In fact, the company logo—a target sight superimposed over a bear claw—isn't entirely figurative. Black bears—at least one of which tops 800 pounds—roam freely all over the property.

Of course, running into a bear is probably the least of your safety concerns at Blackwater. Firing ranges abound on the property. For years, the company's bread and butter was its multimillion-dollar business designing and manufacturing targets and shooting ranges. From its original product—a patented, reactive, reinforced steel target—the company now makes everything from modular, endlessly configurable "shoothouses," with doors and rooms that simulate urban combat, to concrete, reinforced shipping containers that can be set up anywhere in the world as self-contained ranges. (A personal favorite is the "Dueling Tree"—an upright stand with three targets on each side. Hit the target and it gets knocked over to your opponent's side where he can knock it back. The first shooter with all six targets on his side loses. Think of it as tetherball with guns.)

But we're only scratching the surface. Though the company is less than ten years old, it's already become the alpha and omega of military outsourcing. The target systems remain a multimillion-dollar business, but now the corporate flagship is just one part of a very large fleet. Indeed, it would be hard to understate Blackwater's capabilities:

- A burgeoning logistics operation that can deliver 100- or 200-ton self-contained humanitarian relief response packages faster than the Red Cross.
- A Florida aviation division with 26 different platforms, from helicopter gunships to a massive Boeing 767. The company even has a Zeppelin.
- The country's largest tactical driving track, with multi-surface, multi-elevation positive and negative cambered turns, a skid pad, and a ram pad for drivers learning how to escape ambushes.
- A 20-acre manmade lake with shipping containers that have been mocked up with ship rails and portholes, floating on pontoons, used to teach how to board a hostile ship.
- A K-9 training facility that currently has 80 dog teams deployed around the world. Ever wondered how to rappel down the side of nine stacked shipping containers with a bomb-sniffing German shepherd dog strapped to your chest? Blackwater can teach you.
- A 1,200-yard-long firing range for sniper training.
- A sizable private armory. The one gun locker I saw contained close to 100 9mm handguns—mostly military issue Beretta M9s, law enforcement favorite Austrian Glocks, and Sig Sauers.

Mark Hemingway is a writer in Washington.

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• An armored vehicle still in development called the Grizzly; the prototype's angular steel plates are ferocious-looking. The suspension is being built by one of Blackwater's North Carolina neighbors—Dennis Anderson, monster truck champion and the man responsible for the "Grave Digger" (the ne plus ultra of monster trucks).

And there's much, much more. Sitting in his second-story office with expansive views of the grounds, Blackwater vice president for strategic initiatives and former recon Marine Chris Taylor makes a sound business case for the Blackwater facility. "One of the single greatest factors that makes us who we are today is, one, we are always complete, correct, and on time with our services and, two, this facility—this is the greatest barrier to entry in the market of doing training and security operations; nobody else has this." Taylor continues: "To build this facility today—$40 or $50 million, and nobody's got that kind of coin. Nobody wants to invest that, especially if you are going into a market where there already is a big dog."

The Virginian-Pilot / Polaris

Firing ranges were Blackwater's original business.

Still, at a certain point touring their facilities, the immensity of the place seems like, well, overkill. Of all the curiosities littered throughout the gargantuan property, it's hard not to be taken aback by "R U Ready High"—a firing range modeled after a high school, as well as an old school bus used for training in tactical hostage situations.

Taylor patiently explains that the company built it immediately after Columbine and that local police forces and SWAT teams often have woefully inadequate training for such situations even to this day. Sure enough, shortly after my tour of the facilities, there were two school hostage situations within days of each other, again in Colorado and in Pennsylvania. Neither ended well.

It may seem callous that Blackwater is making a buck preparing police to deal with such horrific events. But somebody has to be in the business of worst case scenarios. It's not their fault that everywhere—from Colorado to Iraq—business is so good.

While Blackwater's training and logistics operations might be the heart of their operation, that's not the reason the company is on the verge of becoming a household name. Among its initial government contracts was one for antiterrorist training in the wake of the USS *Cole* bombing. A single marksman could have taken out the approaching bomb-laden boat, but most soldiers on deck weren't even carrying loaded weapons at the time. Recognizing a major weakness, the Navy awarded an "urgent and compelling need" contract to Blackwater to train 20,000 sailors in force protection. The company still executes that contract to this day. And from that start, it gradually expanded its roster of services available to the military. Enter the war on terror, and the military began looking for something beyond training and support services—actual manpower.

Blackwater is now one of the largest and most respected suppliers of "private military contractors" in Iraq. The company has carried out high-profile assignments—such as their exclusive contract to guard Ambassador L. Paul Bremer when he was the top U.S. civilian in Iraq—whose performance by a private company would once have been unthinkable.

The company's work in Iraq has not been without incident. The four American contractors killed in Falluja in March 2004 were providing transport security for a Kuwaiti food service company under a Blackwater Security Consulting contract. Their bodies were dragged through the streets and the disfigured corpses were eventually strung from a bridge with an electrical cord. The families of the four men—one of them a revered former SEAL instructor—are suing Blackwater, alleging that they were rushed out on the mission without adequate preparation or protection.

Aside from providing one of the most demoralizing images of the war, the killing of the four Blackwater employees did two major things. It was the catalyst for the Battle of Falluja, a brutal but ultimately successful attempt to reclaim the city from insurgents, which resulted in 83 additional U.S. troops killed in action. And it drew national attention

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to the use of private contractors—"mercenaries" to their more vehement detractors—in Iraq.

In the first Gulf war, the ratio of private contractors to military personnel was one to sixty. This time it's approaching one to one. The *Washington Post* last week reported that the Pentagon counts about 100,000 contractors in Iraq. Private contractors are being used to supply everything from pizzas to porta-potties; still the decidedly larger ratio is no doubt the result of the 20,000 or so serving in a quasi-military role—almost three times the number of British military forces currently in Iraq.

Blackwater objects to the use of the m-word for its employees, preferring the term "private military contractors." For one thing, "mercenary" is not accurate. Private military contractors in Iraq do not execute offensive operations—they only provide security, and their rules of engagement are to use proportionate force only when attacked. Nonetheless, private military contractors in Iraq are known for their aggressive behavior. Retired Marine colonel Thomas X. Hammes is a vocal critic of Blackwater, having seen them guarding Bremer. "The problem is, in protecting the principal they had to be very aggressive, and each time they went out, they had to offend locals, forcing them to the side of the road, being overpowering and intimidating, at times running vehicles off the road, making enemies each time they went out," Hammes said in a PBS interview. However, Hammes noted, "Blackwater's an extraordinarily professional organization, and they were doing exactly what they were tasked to do."

In fact, Blackwater objects to its personnel being tarred as mercenaries mainly because they regard it as an assault on their character and their professionalism. "We're in nine different countries," says Chris Taylor, "probably have about 2,300 people deployed today, another 21,000 in our database, and these are people the majority of whom have already had a career in public service, either military or law enforcement, who are honorably discharged, who have any number of medals for heroism. Yet we still have to face critics who say everybody is a mercenary—they're only out for a buck."

Blackwater insists the money is exaggerated. "The thing that gets all the attention is that it's a business, a going concern. But there are nowhere near the profits that everybody thinks," Taylor says. They are quite serious about the moral importance of their work, a message that starts at the top. Blackwater CEO Erik Prince, the company's founder, "believes to his core that this is his life's work," says Taylor. "If you're not willing to drink the Blackwater Kool-aid and be committed to supporting humane democracy around the world, then there's probably a better place" to go work, "because that's all we do."

Though his military career was brief, as a former Navy SEAL platoon commander, Prince is no dilettante. He attended officer candidate school after finishing college in 1992, and the next year he joined SEAL Team 8 based out of Norfolk. Prince eventually deployed to Haiti, the Middle East, and Bosnia, among other assignments. He is blond, handsome, and ridiculously all-American looking. His posture is ramrod straight, and his clipped sentences are true to his martial roots. At only 37, he remains in impeccable shape and looks as ready to step onto the battlefield as into a boardroom.

He hardly fits the soldier of fortune archetype. He is a staunch Christian—his father helped James Dobson found Focus on the Family—and his politically conservative views are well known in Washington, where Prince supports a number of religious and right-leaning causes. He attended Hillsdale College in Michigan, a font of conservative ideology, where he is remembered for being the first undergraduate at the small liberal arts school to serve on the local volunteer fire department. (The only book on the shelf in the boardroom of Blackwater's Northern Virginia offices is a copy of the eminent conservative historian Paul Johnson's *A History Of The American People*.)

Nobody can say Prince is in it for the money, either. His father Edgar started a small die-cast shop in Holland, Michigan, in 1965. Along the way he patented the now-ubiquitous lighted vanity mirror in automobile visors; a year after his 1995 death, the family company sold for over $1 billion, an enormous inheritance for Erik and his sisters.

The next year Erik left the Navy and founded Blackwater. It was the end of the Cold War. The Clinton administration and Congress had been eagerly downsizing military facilities and training—much to the consternation of many officers, Prince included. Prince knew there would be a market for the kind of training Blackwater would provide; his initial purchase of 6,000 acres in Moyock does not suggest his vision for the company was modest. (It's currently 7,500 acres; the company has plans to relocate the Florida aviation division to North Carolina near its headquarters, as well as open training facilities in California and the Philippines.)

Regardless of his inheritance, Prince's subsequent shepherding of Blackwater has proved him as adept a businessman as his father. And there you have it. Erik Prince—mercenary mogul and liberal America's worst nightmare. Not only can he buy and sell you, he can kill you before you even know he's in the room.

For a conservative like Prince, you can't make the world a better place without harnessing the power of free markets. He sounds more like an MBA than a mercenary. Prince believes that an entrepreneurial spirit

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and the military go naturally together: "This goes back to our corporate mantra: We're trying to do for the national security apparatus what Fed Ex did for the postal service," Prince says. "They did many of the same services that the Postal Service did, better, cheaper, smarter, and faster by innovating, [which] the private sector can do much more effectively."

Of all the charges leveled at Blackwater, one of the most damning is that they are war profiteers. And it's a charge the company is eager to defend against, especially in light of the fact that it has been awarded numerous CIA and other no-bid "urgent and compelling need" contracts by the government, the terms of which are often shrouded in secrecy.

Blackwater prides itself on its cost-effectiveness. "The DoD has lots of great people trapped in it. They are trapped in between stratified layers of bureaucracy that destroy innovation and efficiency. The private sector can do many of those things, whether it's training or logistics or airlift—a lot of those kinds of peripheral issues. And we do it in a market-based manner and drive those efficiencies. So when they say 'Ah, we need about 100 guys to do that job,' we say, 'Actually, you only need about 10 to do that job,'" Prince explains.

Proving cost-effectiveness is nearly impossible as there are no comprehensive data on private military contractors and institutional savings. "It is not clear that outsourcing always saves money," Brookings Institution scholar Peter Singer states in his book *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*. In fact, as Singer pointed out in a cover story in *Foreign Affairs*, military contracts are seldom set up to achieve cost-effectiveness. "Too often, the 'cost plus' arrangement has become the default form for all contracts. But this setup, in effect, gives companies more profit if they spend more. When combined with inadequate oversight, it creates a system ripe for inefficiency and abuse," Singer says.

Blackwater's position on expensive military contracts seems to be that they didn't start the fire. It seems that stratified layers of bureaucracy in military contracts are found both within and outside the DoD. A cursory examination of the circumstances surrounding Blackwater's infamous Falluja casualties shows why. On the surface, it looked like a simple contract to protect a Kuwaiti food service company transporting food and kitchen supplies. But as outlined in journalist Robert Young Pelton's thorough new book *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror*, here's how the financial arrangement really worked.

Blackwater was contracted to provide transport security for Regency Hotel and Hospitality. The Kuwaiti food service company itself was a subcontractor of a German company, Eurest Support Services. ESS in turn was a subcontractor of Kellogg, Brown and Root, which is itself a subsidiary of Halliburton. KBR has an exclusive $7.2 billion contract with the military for managing the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, or LOGCAP, which handles global support functions for the military, e.g., food. How much anyone gets paid at any point along this long and winding paper trail is unknown, as KBR considers all LOGCAP billing confidential, something each of its subcontractors must agree to in writing. Violation of this privacy clause is punishable by $250,000 in fines. However, it can be safely assumed that at each level of subcontracting, the companies mark up their costs, bloating the price to the taxpayer. These massive contracts are easier for the government to manage than multiple smaller ones. Prince says that's a problem.

"One of the best ways the U.S. government overall, particularly the DOD, can get better value for the taxpayers is by improving the training, standards, and competence of their own contracting officers," he says. "When you go to sell to a Fortune 500 company, their purchasing officer knows more about your process than you do—they really drill down; they know the best value and they expect execution complete, correct, and on time. With government contracting officers that's not always the case; that's seldom the case. There's a lot more shortcomings that are allowed that go unpunished."

So if private military contractors are considered cost effective, that's no doubt partly because they're being graded on a curve set by the Department of Defense—home of the $200 hammer and $500 toilet seat. Blackwater has earned $505 million in publicly identifiable contracts since 2000—it's no wonder private military contractors jokingly refer to themselves as the "Coalition of the Billing."

As for the individual contractors on the ground, pay varies, but $600-$700 a day would not be out of line for a qualified armed guard, and higher figures are commonplace, depending on qualifications and experience. The good pay is a bit of a joke within the industry. Circulating on the message boards and email lists of contractors for some time has been this tongue-in-cheek but nonetheless revealing "Contractor's Creed": *I care not for ribbons and awards for valor. I do this job for the opportunity to kill the enemies of my country, and to finally get that boat I've always wanted. In any combat zone, I will always locate the swimming pool, beer, and women, because I can. I will deploy on my terms, and if it ever gets too stupid, I will simply find another company that pays me more.*

Despite the ethical perils inherent in such work, Prince insists not just that the future of warfare depends on private companies driving market efficiencies, but that this is the way of the world. "I would go back to a deeper view of history. The idea of private contractors doing this kind of work is not a recent phenomenon,"

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he says. He can rattle off any number of examples of mercenaries being used throughout history—many of whom were beloved figures in U.S. history, from Revolutionary hero Lafayette to the Flying Tigers in World War II.

That may be the "deeper view" of history—but it glosses over the recent history of mercenaries, which is horrifying. Blackwater is trying to emerge as a credible and ethical company in an industry with a reputation of being anything but. Most notorious in this respect is Executive Outcomes, a mercenary company that started in South Africa in 1989, drawing personnel from the remnants of the outgoing apartheid regime's shady military and internal intelligence operations.

Clients included Texaco and DeBeers, but Executive Outcomes wasn't exactly discriminating about whose money it took. In 1996, one of EO's principals, Simon Mann, a former SAS officer and heir to a substantial brewing fortune, created a subsidiary called Sandline. Mann recruited a former lieutenant colonel in the Scots Guards, Tim Spicer, to head up the operation. Creating a subsidiary with a different name was also an attempt in part to remove the stink that Executive Outcomes had acquired in its seven years of existence. It was Spicer and Mann who came up with the term Private Military Company and began rebranding mercenaries in earnest.

Sandline's first big contract came in January 1997—$36 million from the government of Papua New Guinea, to help it regain control of a copper mine that had been seized by rebels. This did not go well; Spicer was arrested as soon as Sandline forces attempted to enter the country and freed only after the British government intervened. Public outcry over Sandline's contract very nearly destabilized the Papuan government, forcing the prime minister to resign.

If Spicer and Mann were chastened by the incident, they didn't show it. By 1998 Sandline was embroiled in a much bigger scandal—allegedly violating a U.N. arms embargo in Sierra Leone on behalf of an Indian client accused of embezzling millions from a Thai bank. Executive Outcomes dissolved in 1999 in response to anti-mercenary legislation introduced in South Africa, but Sandline operated until 2004.

Sandline's closing in 2004 was not incidental. That same year, Mann was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Zimbabwe. He had been arrested along with a planeload of mercenaries and former EO and Sandline colleagues en route to foment a coup in Equatorial Guinea, a tiny despotic country in the armpit of Africa that happens to have substantial oil reserves off the coast.

Mann's failed coup made a huge splash internationally, in part because one of the people allegedly bankrolling the operation was Mark Thatcher, son of the former British prime minister. Weirder still, the coup attempt was likely inspired by Frederick Forsyth's 1974 bestseller *The Dogs of War*, about a band of mercenaries who attempt to overthrow the government of a fictional African country clearly modeled after Equatorial Guinea. As if that weren't enough, it is quite credibly reputed that Forsyth himself bankrolled an unsuccessful 1972 coup attempt in the same country with funds from his first novel, *The Day of the Jackal*, and that Forsyth's real-life exploits were the basis of his allegedly fictional *Dogs of War* published two years later. The *pièce de résistance* to this whole saga? Forsyth is one of a small number of private investors in the current business venture of Mann's good friend and former business partner, Tim Spicer.

Polaris

Blackwater parachuting demo at a military trade show in Jordan

While Mann began rotting in jail, Spicer was busy positioning himself and his new company, Aegis Defense Services. Despite the fact that he was called in for questioning by the British government and suspected of being involved in some capacity with Mann's 2004 coup attempt, in May of that year Aegis was awarded a $293 million contract from the U.S. government to provide security for the Army Corps of Engineers and the Iraq Project and Contracting Office, the two U.S. agencies most directly responsible for

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Iraqi reconstruction. This despite the fact that the company had no previous experience in Iraq and clearly didn't have the resources to fulfill the contract. The contract is shrouded in controversy; as head of security for the Project Management Office (precursor to the Project and Contracting Office), British Brigadier General Tony Hunter-Choat wrote the terms of the contract. Hunter-Choat and Spicer were contemporaries in the British military and are known to have worked together previously in the Balkans. Another British general, James Ellery, who worked with Hunter-Choat at the Project Management Office and on the contract specifications, now works for Aegis.

The Aegis contract got the attention of Congress, and eventually the Pentagon admitted that its contracting officer was completely unaware of Spicer's background. Aegis's first DOD audit in 2005 was damning, including the charge that the company was trying to ramp up so fast to meet the contract requirements they were hiring poorly vetted Iraqis and giving them passes to the Green Zone. The company also came under scrutiny when videos of Aegis contractors indiscriminately firing at civilian cars surfaced on the Internet. Despite this, Aegis is carrying out extensive contracting operations in Iraq to this day.

The larger question for Erik Prince and Blackwater has to be: How to remove the stink that clings to their industry? How can they convince the world that they are "committed to supporting humane democracy" when everyone else in their industry has been eager to sell it out? With a Democratic Congress and talk of withdrawal from Iraq, most private military contractors are wondering what's next.

Blackwater thinks it has the answer. "I just got back from Darfur," says Chris Taylor, the vice president for strategic initiatives. "I called Erik on my sat phone and said, 'I was in Juba; there's 300 U.N. vehicles in a motor pool, there's any number of NGOs driving within a one-mile radius within Juba, and nothing's getting done. The only time you see people in their vehicles is when they were going to the tent cities, because there's a bar in every tent city."

Prince and other key Blackwater leaders have also visited war-torn Darfur. While there may be other private military contractors that are larger, most of them support and conduct operations through a patchwork of subcontracts. By contrast, Blackwater can offer every conceivable service its people might need, so when they go into an area their resources are entirely self-contained, making them ideally suited to humanitarian work in difficult conditions—they have the resources to provide both supplies and security with military precision. "We're not big outsourcers, which is kind of ironic because we play a big role in the outsourcing market. The more layers of subcontracting, the harder it is for you to get a straight answer and get something corrected," Taylor says.

Blackwater vice-chairman Cofer Black, a former CIA agent and State Department coordinator for counterterrorism, made waves at a conference in Amman, Jordan, earlier this year saying the company is ready to provide brigade-size forces (1,500-3,000 soldiers) for peacekeeping missions around the world. Reflecting on his experience in Darfur, Taylor says the solution to the situation is obvious. "I'm not really good at math but it seems like a pretty simple equation to solve. Get more people, skilled people, in there. Even in Darfur today, [there are only] 7,000 African Union troops in a place the size of France," Taylor says. "So why not send us?"

Well, for one thing, the humanitarian world has seen the ravages of mercenary activities in Africa for decades, and they have reason to be suspicious. Even Sandline hid behind the excuse of humanitarian work. When it was shuttered in 2004, the official reason given was that, owing to a lack of governmental support, "the ability of Sandline to make a positive difference in countries where there is widespread brutality and genocidal behaviour is materially diminished."

Blackwater insists it is different. Prince and Blackwater have been involved in charities on the margins of the humanitarian world for some time now. But the resistance is fierce. "Cofer and I have been speaking about our ability to help in Darfur ad infinitum, and that just pisses off the humanitarian world," Taylor says. "They have problems with private security companies, not because of performance but because they think that in some cases it removes their ability to cross borders, to talk to both sides, to be neutral. And that's great, but the age-old question—is neutrality greater than saving one more life? What's the marginal utility on one more life?"

It would also require the humanitarian world to come to terms with one of its greatest failings. Time and again humanitarian efforts are foiled and set back because of the inability to provide the security that enables relief efforts to go forward in dangerous areas.

Currently the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations has an annual budget of $7 billion, to say nothing of the billions in private charities and foreign aid pouring in to the world's worst places. Even those suspicious of Blackwater's motives must realize it makes good business sense that they would be interested in the work. Why chase after shady corporate clients when the mother lode is in helping people?

It's true there may be no good way to calculate the marginal utility of one more life. But just in case the world needs them, in the swamps of North Carolina, a few thousand rough men stand ready—for a price. ♦

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Back to Your Studies

The unbearable shallowness of the Iraq Study Group.

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

For the second time since 9/11, Americans have been treated to the undemocratic phenomenon of private citizens assuming the responsibilities and prerogatives of elected officials. First we had the 9/11 Commission. Not content to present its findings and recommendations to the president and Congress, the commission went on a nationwide lobbying campaign to persuade America, and pressure its representatives, into accepting its "advice." Now we have the Baker-Hamilton Commission, officially known as the Iraq Study Group, self-consciously following in its predecessor's footsteps.

From its paltry discussion of America's counterinsurgency in Iraq, to its recommendations about troop levels, to its scathing condemnation of American diplomacy under Condoleezza Rice and Iraqi politics under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, to its embrace of "engagement" with Syria and Iran, and to its unstated but clear call for American pressure on Israel to concede more "land-for-peace" to the Palestinians, the ISG report is strong on assertions but weak on arguments. Let us look quickly at the commission's core commentary and recommendations, starting with Iraq, and then, like the report, radiating outward toward Iraq's neighbors.

The ISG opens by telling us that "the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating" and that the country "is vital to regional and even global stability, and is critical to U.S. interests," but then fails to tell us what the U.S. military has done right or wrong since 2003. Nowhere in the report can we find a thoughtful discussion of those counterinsurgency campaigns where the American military has done well (Tal Afar) and those where it has done poorly (most of our operations in Baghdad since the fall of 2003). I suspect that the ISG has not done so because any serious review of the past would give the reader a profound sensation of déja vu: Baker and Hamilton assert boldly that their commission's conclusions do not amount to "staying the course." Yet Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his generals John Abizaid and George Casey could have written the report's Iraq portions. Take a look at Secretary Rumsfeld's final "options" memorandum, and read the ISG report. The similarities are overwhelming.

For three years, Rumsfeld and Abizaid have tried to train Iraqi military and police forces to replace U.S. soldiers. They stand up, we stand down. For three years, American and allied troops have increasingly withdrawn from directly policing Iraqi cities and roads. The result: a Sunni Arab insurgency and holy war against Shiite Arabs and Kurds that has slaughtered tens of thousands and engendered enormous anger in the Arab Shiite community, which had been defined in 2003 and 2004 by its astonishing forbearance. A once moderate Shiite community has radicalized. The Shia now seek protection from their own pitiless men. Where once Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, a bulwark of moderation and pro-democratic spirit, could check the young firebrand Moktada al-Sadr in the Shiite slums of Baghdad, now Sadr, if he chooses to, can overwhelm Sistani in the holy city of Najaf, the seat of Sistani's power. As America's feeble counterinsurgency strategy—aptly named by General Abizaid a "light footprint"—helped wreck Iraqi society, Rumsfeld scolded the Iraqis for not doing enough.

And what does the Baker-Hamilton Commission recommend? More of the same, except faster. We are going to embed more troops and contractors in Iraqi military and police units as America simultaneously withdraws from Iraq? This is a strategy, already proven wrong, that can end only in the collapse of the Iraqi army, numerous

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American hostages, and a pointless increase in U.S. casualty rates. Embedding more U.S. soldiers in Iraqi military units is a good idea—an American presence among Iraqis clearly fortifies the confidence and combat potential of these units. But this is at best—as we have learned over and over again since 2003—a long-term approach to building an Iraqi army capable of waging perhaps the most tactically and spiritually challenging of all military exercises—counterinsurgency and urban warfare.

In a country like post-Saddam Iraq, where sectarian nerves are raw, only forceful American leadership can ensure the necessary combat ethics and discipline to keep military units from imploding into militias. If the United States is going to embed enough soldiers to ensure Iraqi military integrity, then we are talking about continuing U.S. military control of the Iraqi army. And we ought to admit that the Iraqi police forces, roughly 200,000 men, are unreliable and cannot be used in counterinsurgency efforts, perhaps even in basic crime prevention. We may, after a few years, make the Iraqi army more effective. At present, its official troop strength of 135,000 bears no relationship to the number capable of counterinsurgency operations. But Iraq is likely to descend much further into hell while we wait for this improvement. Meanwhile, the Iraqi army will fracture as internecine strife rips up the nation. Sunni versus Shiite, Sunni versus Sunni, Shiite versus Shiite, and Sunni and Shiite Arabs versus Kurds—all are probable unless the United States *soon* reverses the dynamic in Mesopotamia.

The Iraqi army, despite the strenuous efforts of Generals Abizaid and Casey, simply isn't effective, either on defense or on offense.

The ISG tells us that things are "dire" and that urgent changes are called for. They are obviously right, which is exactly why the United States must take the lead. Only the U.S. military is capable of moving quickly and decisively in clearing and holding Baghdad and other centers of the Sunni insurgency. Iraqis will have critical supporting roles in both these functions (as they have had in every single successful counterinsurgency operation in Iraq). But they will be supporting us. We will not be supporting them.

Let us be clear: The Sunni insurgency and holy war against the Shiite community cannot be broken unless the cities of Baghdad and Ramadi are pacified. Unless these two towns are cleared and held, there is no way any Shiite government in Baghdad can begin the process of slowly neutralizing the murderous Shiite militias that now operate often with government complicity. The militias have gained increasing support from the Shiite community because they are the only effective means of neighborhood protection and offensive operations against Sunni insurgents and holy warriors. Only the militias slake the very human desire for revenge.

The Iraqi army, despite the strenuous efforts of Generals Abizaid and Casey, simply isn't effective, either on defense or on offense. And the Americans, who started withdrawing from Baghdad's streets in the fall of 2003 (perhaps the most catastrophic decision ever made by General Abizaid), have retreated further into large, well-fortified bases. Revenge killings of innocent Sunnis are an ugly and unavoidable outgrowth of this process. They cannot be stopped unless the United States and the Iraqi government first significantly diminish the Sunni Arab menace—that is, clear and hold Baghdad and Ramadi.

According to the ISG, the bulk of American manpower in Iraq could be out of the country by 2008. How in the world does this happen? The Iraqi army is going to take down Baghdad and Ramadi without us in the lead, while we are withdrawing? The ISG didn't cite one—not one—military operation in Iraq since 2003 that would lend credence to the idea that Iraqi military forces any time soon can handle small clear-and-hold operations, let alone massive efforts to neutralize major cities. The ISG does cite the critical need for the United States and the Iraqis to have better intelligence in Iraq. But how does good tactical counterinsurgency or anti-sectarian intelligence develop? Physical control of the terrain that comes through troop saturation. The more physical security Americans and Iraqis bring to a given area, the better our intelligence is.

The ISG's troop-withdrawal scenario would probably destroy meaningful intelligence collection throughout the Sunni triangle. The ISG wants to erect political "milestones" for the Iraqi government that would be impossible to meet but would trigger U.S. troop reductions regardless of the security situation. Contrary to its intent, the ISG would guarantee that radical Sunni Islamist groups, including al Qaeda, would expand their bases of operations in an intelligence void. The notion that the United States can maintain small units of special-operations forces inside Iraq, or "over the horizon," to neutralize al Qaeda and other Sunni holy-warrior organizations is impractical since we are very unlikely to have the intelligence to make special operations feasible. We won't know where their personnel are with any precision.

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We won't be able to distinguish between radical Islamists who just loathe us and radical Islamists using Iraq as a refuge and training base for attacks against Americans in the Middle East and elsewhere.

If the Americans start to withdraw precipitously from Iraq, intelligence collection will likely deteriorate even more quickly than the Iraqi army. Posting a much larger contingent of CIA officers inside the Green Zone to train more Iraqis in the American way of intelligence collection and analysis, which the commission recommends, is unlikely to compensate for the lack of U.S. forces on the ground. Once we are perceived as ineluctable losers in Mesopotamia—and we're not quite there yet—the quality and quantity of American intelligence will plummet.

The report's laundry list of 79 recommendations bespeaks the ISG's disconnectedness from Iraq, where the country's continuing implosion surely allows for only a few American options, all military. When violence is the common denominator of life, and all believe that they or members of their families may die tomorrow, breathless advice about Iraq's judicial system, the need for more economic reconstruction, the country's systemic corruption (welcome to the Middle East), or the Iraqi constitution are surreal distractions.

No "national reconciliation" will be possible unless it is preceded by more physical security for all communities.

No error of the Baker-Hamilton Commission is greater than its insistence that there is no military solution to Iraq's instability, that it's the responsibility of Iraqis to solve the country's primary problems, and that America can only play a supporting role. The Iraq Study Group, many Bush administration officials, and Central Command talk incessantly about "national reconciliation" and a "political deal" between the Sunni and Shiite Arabs as the key to stability and peace. In other words, the solution in Iraq is Shiite concessions to Sunnis. For three years, Americans have been trying to convince Sunnis to accept the new Iraq, which will be dominated by Shiite Arabs and Kurds, who represent 80 percent of the population. Put another way, Shiite Arabs, who represent around 65 percent of the population, must give much more power to the minority Sunni Arabs than could be gained by them at the ballot box.

However, America's efforts in this have gone unrequited: No major Sunni Arab organization—especially not the all-critical Muslim Clerics Association—has ever condemned the insurgency or even suggested that foreign holy warriors, responsible for much of the suicide bombing, are beyond the pale. The ugly truth is that many, perhaps most, Iraqi Sunni Arabs are not much distressed by the killing of Iraqi Shia. Although it may still be possible to get the Shiite community to allow Arab Sunnis more checks and balances inside the government (for example, through the creation of an upper legislative house, permitted by Iraq's constitution), unless the United States changes the dynamic on the ground by surging troops (which would also better protect Sunnis against Shiite militias), the Shia are unlikely to compromise. They will not turn away from the militias, who offer the best protection against insurgents and holy warriors.

In short, no "national reconciliation" will be possible unless it is preceded by more physical security for all communities. Greater security for both Sunnis and Shiites will allow more flexibility in the political system. Unfortunately, the Iraq Study Group gets this backwards.

And the "external approaches" of the Baker-Hamilton Commission are substantively even thinner than its discussion of Iraq's internal challenges. The ISG envisions Iran and Syria, which have abetted the radicalization of Iraq, helpfully interfering in the country.

Repeatedly, the ISG asserts that "no country in the region will benefit in the long term from a chaotic Iraq." Really? If the self-interest of Iran and Syria is so clearly in favor of stability, why have they been fostering violence in the country? Syria and Iran have been aiding both Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq. According to U.S. officials, there is a pile of intercept and electronic intelligence clearly showing these two countries have been abetting both sides.

The ISG propounds that Iraq's neighbors "should form a support group to reinforce security and national reconciliation within Iraq." Leaving national reconciliation aside, Tehran has given aid to the militia of Moktada al-Sadr and the Badr corps of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Both groups are deeply implicated in death-squad killings. Iran has also aided in the importation of the Lebanese Hezbollah into the Shiite south and helped it set up offices. SCIRI has tried to convince the Iraqi government, and the Americans behind it, that 16,000 members of the Badr Organization who are *still* resident in Iran—that is, young men who are culturally perhaps much more Iranian than they are Iraqi—should be incorporated into the Iraqi army and the security services. Baker might possibly conceive

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of this SCIRI deployment as a "support group" "reinforcing security" and "national reconciliation," but it's a good bet that not a single Iraqi Sunni Arab would agree with him. Approaching Iran and Syria on Iraq isn't cunning and clever realpolitik. It's just stark naiveté.

Finally, the call for a renewed Israeli-Palestinian push also makes no sense. Let us ignore for the moment the Palestinian internecine strife, in which none of the contenders believes in a lasting peace with the Israelis. The war between Hamas and Fatah has made both organizations *more* anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, and anti-American. How in the world would rancorous Israeli and Palestinian talks have any effect on Iraq or the Sunni-Shiite collision in Mesopotamia?

If the Iraqi Shia are provoked into conquering the entire Sunni triangle, which will send a massive wave of Sunni Arab refugees into Jordan, how will Israeli-Palestinian talks help the Hashemite monarchy survive the radicalization of its politics by Iraqi Sunni supremacists, fundamentalists, and former Baathists? As much as our European allies would love to see renewed Israeli-Palestinian talks, it's difficult to envision a scenario where these talks could be productive. It's difficult to see how the United States could back this enterprise without appearing to be scared and weak, hardly a formula to engender moderation in the other parties to these discussions. Failed talks are not better than no talks at all.

We didn't really need to wait nine months for a report that could have been written eight months ago. We already had Secretary Rumsfeld's and General Abizaid's unsuccessful tactics. We already knew what James Baker thought about Syria, Iran, Israel, and Palestine. For those of us who saw some of the deliberations of the Iraq Study Group, the report is less than the discussions that produced it. Even a Washington establishment hopelessly spooked by Iraq should have done better. ♦

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Igor Gouzenko (left), INS correspondent Bob Considine, 1954

Spy vs. Spy

What Igor Gouzenko taught the West BY HARVEY KLEHR

Igor Gouzenko was a code clerk in the Russian embassy in Ottawa whose decision to defect in September 1945 set off a political earthquake. Because he took with him a few hundred pages of documents that implicated a number of Canadian civil servants and scientists as Soviet spies, his case generated headlines, roiled diplomatic waters, and reverberated in both American and Canadian politics for years afterwards. Amy Knight, a freelance Russian expert, is only slightly exaggerating when she titles her account of the case, *How the Cold War Began.*

While she has thoroughly canvassed recently opened archives about Gouzenko and the firestorm he created, Knight is not a terribly reliable guide to what the case revealed about Soviet espionage in North America or the Western response to it. She misstates key pieces of evidence and labors to exonerate individuals now confirmed to have been Soviet agents. Despite all her research, she misunderstands both the institutional loyalties of domestic Communist parties and the nature of the threat faced by counterintelligence agencies.

How the Cold War Began
The Igor Gouzenko Affair and the Hunt for Soviet Spies
by Amy Knight
Carroll & Graf, 384 pp., $27.95

Gouzenko was about to be recalled to Russia when, enamored of life in the West and fearful of being disciplined for security lapses, he secreted evidence of a large GRU (Soviet military intelligence) spy ring directed by his superior, Colonel Nikolai Zabotin, and sought political asylum along with his pregnant wife and young daughter. His initial efforts were a comedy of errors, as various civil servants, newspaper reporters, and police officials shuffled him from one office to another, either confused by his rambling and broken English or, like subordinates of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, worried that they might offend Russian allies.

Eventually taken into protective custody by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Gouzenko eagerly provided additional information, including the news that an assistant to the U.S. secretary of state was a Soviet agent, thus launching an FBI investigation of Alger Hiss, and implicating a British physicist, Allan Nunn May, as part of an effort to steal atomic bomb secrets. His documents also identified two important leaders of the Canadian Communist party, including a member of Parliament, as key figures in the espionage ring.

Although the Canadians, British,

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and Americans kept mum the news that Gouzenko was in custody (hoping to persuade the Soviets that he was on the run), Kim Philby, one of the KGB's moles within the British intelligence services, kept them informed on the progress of the investigation. As a result, they were able to withdraw key personnel, including Zabotin, from Canada, and warn their agents, including May, that they were under suspicion and to avoid any incriminating behavior. In February 1946, J. Edgar Hoover leaked the news that Gouzenko was supplying dramatic information to columnist Drew Pearson. The Canadian government quickly convened a Royal Commission, detained 13 people under a special war powers order that enabled them to be held incommunicado, questioned without benefit of lawyers, and threatened with severe penalties for refusing to testify before this fact-finding body.

The material gathered by the commission was later used in court, most notably the confessions of several of the defendants. In general, anyone who confessed to the commission was convicted, while those who remained silent or denied guilt were more likely to escape punishment.

Knight is critical of the Canadian government for its violations of civil liberties and even its decision to publicize the case. She consistently minimizes the seriousness of the spying and the damage it did. But she is even more irritated by the uses made of the case by American counterintelligence agencies, decrying the impetus it gave to investigations of such Americans as Alger Hiss, the ways in which J. Edgar Hoover used it to buttress allegations by American defectors from Soviet intelligence, like Elizabeth Bentley, and the extent to which it contributed to a "spy scare" that decimated the American left.

In retrospect, it is clear that the Canadian ring was hardly the Soviet Union's most valuable group of agents. By 1944, the GRU had been supplanted as the premier Soviet intelligence agency by the NKVD, which had its own network in Canada and the United States. Virtually all key atomic espionage work, for example, was turned over to the NKVD during World War II. May, who was arrested and convicted in Great Britain, was a far less important source on atomic research than Klaus Fuchs, Ted Hall, and even David Greenglass, all run by the NKVD and exposed several years later. Other Canadian spies provided useful but hardly groundbreaking information on weapons systems, diplomacy, and military issues. Nevertheless, the GRU spy ring had penetrated a variety of Canadian institutions, enlisted a disconcerting number of Canadian citizens, and broken the law to benefit a foreign dictatorship.

In addition to the shock of discovering that a significant number of its citizens were covertly aiding a foreign country, Canadian authorities were most startled by the involvement of two leaders of the Labour Progressive party, as the Communists were then styled. Fred Rose was a Communist representative in Parliament and Sam Carr was one of the party's leading functionaries. Their decision to cooperate with Soviet espionage was, Knight concludes, reckless and "catastrophic" for the party.

Why, then, did they take such a risk?

Knight displays extraordinary naiveté, imagining that Rose, a long-time party functionary, and Carr, a onetime student at the International Lenin School in Moscow, were somehow "duped by the Soviets into thinking their country was a glorious utopia." She never considers that Earl Browder and Eugene Dennis, leaders of the American Communist party, were also enmeshed in espionage, just as reckless. Why would leaders of Western Communist parties believe the welfare of the Soviet Union was more important than the fate of their own Communist parties, let alone the countries of which they were citizens? Were they just dupes, or was the Soviet code name in Venona for party members—"Fellowcountrymen"—indicative of the true loyalties of such hardened cadres?

What Venona and the Mitrokhin archives make absolutely clear is that hundreds of Western Communists willingly spied for the Soviet Union because their ultimate loyalties were not to the countries of which they were citizens, but to the country that enshrined the cause of communism.

Most Communists, of course, did not become spies, and most people who joined the Communist party in the 1930s eventually abandoned it. Knight notes that several of those implicated by Gouzenko were reluctant to spy and sometimes resisted entreaties to hand over information. She laments that Israel Halperin, a chemist, and Arthur Steinberg, a biologist, had their careers blighted even though they were never convicted (or, in Steinberg's case, even indicted) for espionage. But she is less concerned that they never bothered to inform authorities that they had been approached to spy and that they lied when confronted with Gouzenko's evidence.

No doubt many of those recruited to spy were idealists who wanted to help their gallant Soviet allies during World War II. Some may have thought the information they were asked to provide was innocuous. But Carr, Rose, and Browder had been involved with the Communist underground and conspiratorial networks for years before the war. The Canadian Communists had been interned during the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact because their onetime antifascism had been superseded by an alliance with fascists with whom their government was at war. And while most Communists were not spies, most assuredly, virtually all the spies had emerged from the Communist movement.

That inconvenient fact escapes Knight. She agrees that the Soviets were doubtless infuriated that Western governments used the Gouzenko affair "to fight domestic communism," a struggle whose virtues she does not appreciate. She gives a backhanded compliment to the Canadian government, praising it for not outlawing the Communist party, unlike the United States. Her animus towards American anticommunism

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is not only inaccurate—the CPUSA was never outlawed—but also ironic, given that no American Communists were ever treated with such disregard for basic legal rights as the Canadians sequestered in the Gouzenko case, even though it seems a stretch to call the Mountie tactics "Gestapo-like." Likewise, she denounces the Loyalty-Security program instituted by the Truman administration, even though it was based on the rational premise that Communist loyalties were potentially in conflict with national security.

Although Knight is aware of the Venona transcripts, she does not have much confidence in what they reveal. At times she suggests that Soviet intelligence officers routinely exaggerated their accomplishments and claimed sources they didn't have in cables back to Moscow, but she provides no evidence to support that claim. In other places she argues that most of the names mentioned in Venona are simply discussions of potential targets for recruitment, even though most of the messages discuss real sources turning over real material. Elsewhere she brushes off most of the spying that went on as harmless or insignificant. Although she acknowledges that Klaus Fuchs was an atomic spy, she absurdly sniffs that there were "no real atomic secrets to be lost."

Knight dismisses Elizabeth Bentley's allegations of widespread espionage as unsupported and unconvincing. She trumpets the fact that there were no indictments stemming from Bentley's charges, even though the Venona documents demonstrate that Bentley told the truth. What Knight does not seem to understand is why the government was unable to prosecute the dozens of spies Bentley named: Kim Philby had tipped off the Soviets that she was talking, they had cut off ties to their agents, and the United States government had determined not to use the only hard evidence it had—the Venona documents—in open court.

Because Bentley retained no documents from her espionage career, Knight is not inclined to credit her story. And even though Whittaker Chambers *did* produce documents typed on the Hiss family typewriter and others in Alger Hiss's handwriting, she doesn't believe him, either. At one point Knight inaccurately suggests that Chambers provided no evidence to support his allegations against Hiss; at another she implies, again with no evidence, that Chambers fabricated the documents he did produce. She also ignores all the other evidence against Hiss, including testimony from Hede Massing, another spy who testified about his activities, and the detailed information uncovered by Allen Weinstein and Sam Tanenhaus in their splendid books.

Instead, she accepts at face value the statements of spokesmen for the Russian foreign intelligence service (SVR) that Alger Hiss's name does not appear in their archives. (Knight does not bother to inform readers that the SVR's official policy is not to identify as an agent anyone who has not admitted it himself, including Hiss.) Even in the face of incontrovertible evidence that Harry Dexter White consciously provided information to the KGB, Knight balks at acknowledging his espionage. She allows that "White was at least an unwitting informant to the Soviets," ignoring a Venona document in which a KGB agent reported White's commitment to providing information at periodic meetings while driving around Washington in his automobile, or another where he revealed the American negotiating strategy at the first United Nations Conference to the Soviets. She defends him by insisting that "there is no evidence that he was doing this with the intention of subverting American policies."

Knight reserves her indignation for those responsible for ferreting out spies. It was unsporting and reckless of J. Edgar Hoover to initiate investigations of Hiss and White based on mere snippets of information from sources like Gouzenko and Bentley, who had never met them. At one point she criticizes the Canadian government for going public with spy allegations rather than pursuing quiet diplomacy to resolve the issue. She is far angrier at investigators who suspected that the Canadian diplomat E. Herbert Norman was a spy based on his secret Communist party membership while at Cambridge in the 1930s than she is at Norman for lying about his past to those investigators and to Canadian officials. Norman committed suicide and his guilt or innocence remains an open question, but Knight is livid that his lies led to investigations that led to his suicide.

In Knight's legalistic world, no one can be a spy unless they are convicted in a court of law. Most Soviet spies, however, were never prosecuted because the evidence of their guilt was not admissible in court, either because it was derived from decrypted cables or obtained by illegal wiretaps or break-ins. That may represent one of the glories of the Western system of law, but it hardly exonerates those who betrayed their country. While Knight believes the key question to be asked is "why so many innocent people were accused of spying," she is remarkably incurious about why so many American and Canadian Communists were willing to spy. Igor Gouzenko set in motion a hunt for Communist spies, but it was no wild goose chase.

Given her despair about the consequences of his actions, Knight is actually quite balanced in her discussion of Gouzenko himself. Like many defectors, he proved to be a difficult person, headstrong, inflexible, obsessed with money, and convinced that everyone he dealt with was either a simpleton or obtuse. He wrote one surprisingly gifted novel, but otherwise seemed to enjoy only suing critics for libel, griping about his relationship with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and, together with his wife, raising his eight children, none of whom learned his true identity until they turned 16.

After years of ill health, Gouzenko died in 1982. The events he set in motion guarantee that students of the Cold War will long remember him. His legacy is far more positive than Amy Knight is willing to grant. ♦

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What's in a Name?

If it's Rhiannon, quite a lot, actually.

BY JOE QUEENAN

In the astoundingly popular best-seller *Freakonomics*, Steven D. Levitt argues that people with absurd names have trouble landing jobs not because of their names, but because people with ludicrous names tend to come from poor backgrounds, and it is a crummy education that creates the roadblock to success.

This may be true, but it fails to address the repercussions of living in a society where stupid names are fast becoming the norm. It was one thing when frivolous people in Laurel Canyon started naming their progeny Dweezil, Cheyenne, and Brooklyn, but what happens when the epidemic of idiotic nomenclature hits bedrock Middle America?

Not long ago, a friend moved from Princeton, New Jersey, to Boise, Idaho. Here, she enrolled her six-year-old daughter in a ballet class. The roster was dominated by names like Cody, Kelsee, Ciera, Allegra, Colette, Cataline, Sarraye, Maren, Koreen, Oakley, Avery, Sadi, Jade, Kinsey, Leela, Kendall, Ashlee, Michaela, Ayla, Terace, Becca, Tymer, Kieron, Brandi, Kelsey, Taylor, Morgan, Whitney, Brittany, Kaela, Ireland, Amari, and Storm.

While in Boise, my friend took a kick-boxing class with a young woman named Rhiannon. She did not ask how the woman got her name, assuming that it derived from the late-'70s Fleetwood Mac smash hit. She conceded that it was hard to keep a straight face during class because she could not stop visualizing Stevie Nicks enmeshing herself in her bewitching womanly shawls while the instructor's namesake—or even the instructor herself—was taken by, taken by the wind: *Sometimes she took to the sky like a bird in flight / Other times she rang like a bell in the night*, my friend recalls. *She was like a cat in the dark / And then she was the darkness.*

Obviously, no one can be held responsible for having the name Rhiannon. True, cynics might argue that a person can be blamed for *keeping* the name Rhiannon, but in doing so, they unfeelingly ignore the psychic substructure that animates contemporary nomenclature. For most of us grow into the names we are given, and cannot discard them without sacrificing a certain measure of our personality. Lucky Luciano could not have traded in his moniker for Spanky McGettigan. Cher could not suddenly become Madonna; this would only make a bad situation worse. Nor can those hamstrung by unfortunate names toss them overboard without implicitly repudiating their parents, or at least questioning their judgment.

If we assume that Rhiannon's parents were Fleetwood Mac fans, there is every possibility that she has siblings bearing late '70s Easy Listening names like "Sara" and "Tusk." This can be written off as the folly of youth: *It seemed like a good idea at the time*. But what if her parents, despite the decisive cultural and chronological evidence linking them with Stevie Nicks, captiously insist that they did not name their child Rhiannon because of the band's single, but because of an entirely different Rhiannon? Then they force their child to spend the rest of her life insisting that she was not named after the Fleetwood Mac Rhiannon, but for a beloved progenitor, Granny Rhiannon or Tugboat Rhiannon, or perhaps even a mythical proto-Rhiannon who provided the original inspiration for the song.

This makes the girl with the marquis name seem petulant and affected. It's like saying, "No, my parents didn't name me Vito Corleone after the guy in *The Godfather*; they named me after the Vito Corleone who invented the mosh pit."

The kick-boxing arts, or what the French refer to as *les dons pédicombatiques*, are not to be scorned, disparaged, or heaped with contumely. But if it is true that those possessing names like George, James, and Nancy are more likely to ascend to high public office than those named Melchior, Babarina, or Crustacea, we are justified in assuming that certain career options—Archbishop of Canterbury, CEO of Intel—may have closed themselves off to Rhiannon at a very early date.

And here we lock horns with a phenomenon known as the *Greenspan Algorithm*: the inescapable truth that while the public might allow someone who once worshipped Ayn Rand to set interest rates, it would never let anyone actually named Ayn do it, because people named Ayn sound like they may be Sith Lords. By and large, the American people are loath to tolerate cabinet-level weirdness—unless, as in the case of Condoleezza Rice, one is given a pass because of membership in a free-wheeling ethnic group that makes its own rules.

By contrast, in the case of a white woman named Rhiannon, the American people would be reluctant to accept her ascendancy to chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or chief CBS White House correspondent not because of the distressing pop cultural connotations but because the name Rhiannon smacks of the occult and the druidic, both of which are *verboten* in a Judeo-Christian society where people justifiably fear sorcery at both the state and federal level. Inevitably, it would lead to whispers about the Illuminati, the Freemasons, and the Knights Templar: the whole *Da Vinci Code* complex. This does not play well in Peoria.

Why should the plight of a victim named Rhiannon concern the rest of

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us? Partially because we are compassionate human beings and understand that a child named Rhiannon or Brooklyn or Skyler will spend the rest of his life fending off ridicule from thugs named Cheech the Mook. There is also concern that one of our sons could enter into a morganatic marriage with a *femme fatale* named Rhiannon, vastly increasing the likelihood that our grandchildren will be named Mordred, Banquo, or Xena.

But there is another, far more selfish, reason why we should be concerned about the proliferation of astoundingly stupid names. Suppose a few decades down the road the president of the United States is forced to choose between two candidates for chairmanship of the Federal Reserve. As luck would have it, the woman named, say, Rhiannon Cougar Mellencamp, is far more gifted than her rival. But because the president fears that he will be mocked if he chooses a Fed chairman named Rhiannon, he opts for the safer choice: Brandi or Tiffany.

The nitwit he selects immediately raises interest rates, triggering a housing market collapse and a devastating global depression. All because someone, somewhere, decided to name their child after a Stevie Nicks song. *Dreams unwind, love's a state of mind.*

Purists may argue that previous generations also had ridiculous names like Elmer, Caleb, and Purvis. But these were real names, not synthetic ones. And the people who named their children Elmer were probably doing their level best under difficult circumstances; they had hogs to feed or a bad case of rickets. What should concern us is that each generation of stupid names encourages the next generation to be even stupider. It was Anson that begot Heath. It was Morgan that begat Kyla. And one day Rhiannon will beget Clytemeghan or Zugwah.

So if you're reading these lines, and you have an unnamed child on the way, I implore you to heed the words of Fleetwood Mac themselves: *Don't stop thinking about tomorrow / It'll be better than before.*

But not if your kid's named Rhiannon. ♦

Televised Talk

Dick Cavett, master gabmeister of the 1970s.

BY DAVID SKINNER

Half the pleasure of watching episodes of the original *Dick Cavett Show* (1969-74) is in sampling the phony wisdom of the era. The younger generation, everyone said, was just terrific. Marrying young in order to experience sexual intercourse was a big mistake. All that nudity on stage and in the movies these days—well, said older female guests, it's no big deal, but how is that acting? Even the talk about talk is revealing. The word lecture is singled out for being so stuffy.

And yet something wonderful has been lost from talk shows ever since: conversation. On *The Dick Cavett Show*, movie stars, writers, comedians—that is, well-known people with no special qualifications—traded jokes, sometimes at each other's expense, offered opinions on the state of show business, the Vietnam war, women's lib, and otherwise rode the circuit of current topics without necessarily getting anywhere. It was a good time for famous people to hold forth, and no one was better than Dick Cavett at bringing it to television.

Because of a popular and still-entertaining 1974 book cowritten with his college buddy, sometime *Time* writer Christopher Porterfield (also an executive producer of *The Dick Cavett Show* in its heyday), there seems to be little about young Cavett, the shortish boyman with a woody boom for a voice, that isn't known. Often mistaken for a book-length interview because of its Q-&-A format—as I learned in a phone interview with Cavett himself—*Cavett* was not transcribed, but more or less written the old-fashioned way, with the fleet-footed Porterfield acting as straight man, interlocuter, and occasional essayist.

The Dick Cavett Show: Hollywood Greats
Four discs, Shout! Factory, $39.98

The Dick Cavett Show: Comic Legends
Four discs, Shout! Factory, $39.98

The Dick Cavett Show: Rock Icons
Three discs, Shout! Factory, $39.98

The Dick Cavett Show: Ray Charles Collection
Two discs, Shout! Factory, $24.98

The Dick Cavett Show: John and Yoko Collection
Two discs, Shout! Factory, $24.98

Richard Cavett was born in 1936 in Gibbon, Nebraska, to a pair of English teachers. A little boy with a precocious vocabulary, he was a devoted moviegoer at an early age. His mother died from cancer when he was ten, after which his father married yet another English teacher. Socially awkward in his teenaged years, Cavett took an intense interest in magic and began to perform publicly before heading off to Yale. There he came into his own, majoring in drama but minoring in theatrical celebrities visiting New Haven and nearby Manhattan. In addition to a great memory for actors and faces, he had the personality to draw them in.

"No textbook of Dick's was more carefully pored over than Steve Allen's study of a dozen classic comedians, *The Funny Men*," noted Porterfield. "Studying was never too important to be interrupted by the opening monologue on a Bob Hope show, for which Dick would set aside whatever he was doing." Cavett compensated by turning his favored professors into stage characters: He "fastened eagerly onto a teacher's catch phrases or facial tics or rhetorical gimmicks. Once he had made the man

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come alive as an almost Dickensian character, he could make the subject come alive through the man."

After graduation and a season of summer stock, the young performer moved to New York City, but his dramatic career failed to take off. He took a job as a copyboy at *Time*, in whose offices he read in the newspaper that Jack Paar was always searching for material for his opening monologue. After giving this some thought, he typed up what sounded to his mimic's ear like a Paar monologue, then stuck the pages into a *Time* envelope—a prop to help him talk his way past reception at the RCA building. After locating Paar, who was getting ready to do his show, and handing him his jokes on the pretext that the envelope had something to do with an upcoming magazine story, Cavett joined the studio audience to watch.

Paar came out and, in his opening monologue, used some of the material Cavett had written. Spotting him in the elevator afterwards, Paar told him: "Thanks pal, you should do that again sometime." Cavett did, a week later, and was hired.

Working for Paar, Cavett made two comedian-friends who would influence his style, appear on his own show, and become regularly dropped names in his boldface conversation. One was the pre-auteur standup comedian Woody Allen, and the other (whom he met the very next day) was Groucho Marx, then in his 70s. Cavett spotted Groucho at the funeral for George S. Kaufman, and proceeded to keep him company as he walked downtown. Paar retired in March 1962 after only five years of hosting *The Tonight Show.* But Cavett stayed on, writing briefly for Paar's replacement, Johnny Carson, and then for the shortlived *Jerry Lewis Show*, before giving up writing to pursue a career in standup comedy. On the advice of Groucho Marx, who repaid Cavett's worshipful attention with mentorly moments, Cavett tried to make the most of his Nebraska upbringing and his college years.

The autobiographical comedian and stargazing show business buff were both prominent in the persona that Cavett unveiled on his late-night talk show, which actually started as a morning show: the nice young man who wants to know everything about you, but who is also sufficiently convivial to spur things along with light banter or even his own thoughts and feelings. He could play the foil or, for that matter, the star.

His interviewing technique was a marvel of tone. He could make banal questions into little occasions—for storytelling, opinion, whatever—as he ceded control to his guest with the expectation that they do what was necessary to make the conversation lively. Also, his interest in his guests was sincere, establishing a threshold of civility and amusement high enough to generate good talk but low enough for a truly interesting person to rise above it and deliver surprises. The dirty business of booking big names and promoting other projects then faded from view, as the exchange of personalities absorbed the spotlight.

On the phone, Cavett mentions the one piece of advice Jack Paar gave him for his new job: "Don't have interviews. Always have a conversation." In *Cavett*, he was even more explicit that the interviewer's role must consist of more than asking questions. "It's so much nicer when it's more of a dialogue. It's so much easier when you have that breakthrough, and you get into something that resembles actual speech as it would be spoken away from the lights and the camera. . . . When that happens, I feel that I'm in it as an equal, rather than as somebody who is standing aside."

Over the last year, a stream of old Cavett episodes have been collected and released on DVD. Music, rock especially, figures prominently in the collections, though not as prominently as fame itself. This set of greatest hits might instead be called Cavett's greatest gets. An excusable bias, it is, however, corrected somewhat by the wise decision to present full episodes, thus letting in an assortment of second and third guests, several of whom make for better conversation.

Take the convoluted, hilarious, and slightly ribald appearance of Tony Randall, who, though a big star at the time, was actually a second-string guest on an episode featuring Ray Charles. After a couple of songs, Cavett and Charles chat about—what else?—what it's like to be blind, and then Randall comes on and talks about all the naked women hanging around the hotel pool where he stays in Hollywood.

Which is pretty funny, but then the conversation turns to the subject of Wilfrid Lawson, a recently deceased English actor whom Randall worked with in a production of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Like many an actor trying to recreate what existed only on stage, Randall seems in every gesture and word a little precious and overdetermined; but he is totally engrossing as he describes what this little known performer did so well.

The Dick Cavett Show and its host were stalked by the adjective "intellectual," but the topics were rarely ideas, and what guests said, like most conversation, issued from personal experience. "Intellectual" served as a substitute for the category "other," so unlikely was it even then to have a TV show that encouraged guests to talk about whatever they were thinking. Actors and their ilk were not treated as thinkers, but they were expected to be good and spontaneous talkers. Cavett's was a variety show in which chatting was its own performing art.

Several raconteurs who excelled at this game appear in Cavett's Hollywood Greats collection (which, for fans of conversation, is the best of the bunch). John Huston, to whom a 90-minute episode is devoted, surprises with a thoughtful lesson on the history of his adopted country, Ireland, and yet does not shirk his duty as friend and colleague of various famous people, including Humphrey Bogart, telling juicy anecdotes from the movies he'd directed. Also with a full episode to himself, Orson Welles seems as if he would make the ideal drinking companion as he digresses from stories about his theater days to the time he ran into Winston Churchill (a big fan) and drops hints of his luckless search for financial backing for projects. All the personality

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Bettmann / Corbis

Marlon Brando, Dick Cavett, 1973

bubbling just beneath the surface of Peter Bogdanovich's terrific interview book *This is Orson Welles* comes pouring forth.

Katharine Hepburn, that imperious Connecticut WASP, proves to be every bit the prima donna as she is caught on camera unawares complaining about the show's set and barking orders to stagehands.

"Nobody answers in this business," she bellows when her whims aren't instantly gratified. Hepburn was only visiting the set, to get used to the idea of doing an interview when she decided, on the spot, to go ahead and do it. And yet she gave Cavett permission to use the candid footage. Then, in the interview, there is the added pleasure of hearing the great actress, looking especially serene, talk about how every minute of her show business career has been an absolute pleasure.

Humility has its own rewards. On the Comic Legends collection, Carol Burnett confesses that some of the skits on her show aren't all that good, that the performers and writers know when their skit is a dumb one—but still, it's the best they can do. On an episode that is included only because of a Stevie Wonder performance, Elsa Lanchester, who played the bride in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and was married to Charles Laughton, regales the audience with tales of her cosmopolitan childhood in a Parisian dance school run by Isadora Duncan, whom she didn't like one bit. The most elegant appearance (on Hollywood Greats) comes at the cost of an interview, with Fred Astaire as the guest. Modesty seems to inhibit the great dancer-singer from indulging in the autobiography that usually takes up such conversation, though he's very specific and interesting when asked about the work behind his famous routines.

If a slightly hippie air attaches to Cavett's name, it's for two reasons: One, the mood of American adults at the time, struggling, a little pathetically, to engage with the concerns of young Baby Boomers in their Question Authority phase. Remember, this was the era when old fogie book-buyers made Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* the book of the year. And *The Dick Cavett Show* was certainly channeling this sociological impulse. The other reason Cavett's collars seem so wide was his show's embrace of rock 'n' roll. "*Giants* of the field" is how Cavett introduced Jefferson Airplane for his show's Woodstock Special, included in the "Rock Icons" collection.

The Woodstock episode combines the worst pandering of American adulthood with some of the least interesting music of the time. The show's usual studio setup—with standard proscenium and orchestra to the side—was traded in for a chairless room painted all groovy with thin stripes running end to end. The centerpiece of the set was a raised conversation pit with ottomans on which guests sat, not even pretending to be comfortable, looking as if they were wondering what in the world to say to this cat. To his credit, Cavett paused during the opening monologue to remove from his throat the Hugh Hefner scarf he had picked up in wardrobe. To his discredit, he asked the assembled rock stars and folk singers, "Is there anything else you guys want to *rap* about?"

Few of the rock 'n' roll interviews prove watchable—Janis Joplin is an exception—while most of the performances themselves are of only passing interest, especially considering all the footage available of stars like David Bowie or Stevie Wonder. On the phone, Cavett says, "I really didn't give a damn about rock music one way or the other," but he thought many of the rock stars were genuine "characters." Clearly he didn't admire them half as much as some of the old Hollywood hands who graced his soundstage. When, before a show, someone told him he needed to talk to Grace Slick, the Jefferson Airplane vocalist, he had to ask which one was she. In return, Slick called Cavett by the wrong name while the cameras were rolling.

The underlying premise of a talk

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show is that the person famous for making music or movies or what-have-you will make for interesting conversation. It's a shaky premise, even in the best of circumstances, and rock stars visiting Dick Cavett did their best to refute the idea.

No one was less interesting than the biggest rock star Cavett ever hosted: John Lennon, who with Yoko Ono has earned his very own DVD collection, featuring all three of their visits to the show. (If only John and Yoko were tabloid fodder today, we'd have the pleasure of calling this self-serious pair "Joko.") Lennon appears at best dippy and pretentious, and that's just in the first two minutes. Only Marlon Brando, on the "Hollywood Greats" DVD, proved a more worthless talker: enigmatic at first, then transparently narcissistic, and finally, while speaking his own lines, another great bore. But Brando and Lennon (and even Yoko, who plays a drum alongside John as he sings her anthem, "Woman is the Nigger of the World") were great gets. Still, in the hypothetical event that you have to choose to dine with one of them, you would do well to ask if Elsa Lanchester or Tony Randall isn't available instead.

The loveliest thing about *The Dick Cavett Show* was the evidence it supplied of a popular culture capable of complete sentences and a show business culture capable of candor. This sentence from Cavett seems illuminating: "I know that sounds like something from an application to the Famous Writers School, but it's a true story." Imagine, a television talk-show host so articulate he had to make fun of his own too-perfect stories! And such was the standard for conversation and wit on his show.

This had a downside. On a show where the host is genuinely interested in the guests, and also supposed to be genuinely interesting in his own right, the usual trickiness of mutual admiration comes into play. When Bill Cosby failed to answer whether he had ever seen Cavett's standup act, Cavett repeated the question, which Cosby deftly avoided once more. Cavett was also known to disapprove of some of his guests: Timothy Leary was told he was full of crap; Norman Mailer, who snidely referred to Cavett's notes, was told, "Why don't you fold it sideways and put it where the moon don't shine?" Lester Maddox famously stormed off the show when Cavett wouldn't apologize for something footballer Jim Brown said during the commercial. (Alas, none of these latter episodes has been collected.)

Not coincidentally—given this tendency to sharp words—Cavett hosted a number of famous writers. Today, of course, no literary feud such as the Mary McCarthy/Lillian Hellman match could be born on a talk show. The host would fall out of his chair if any epigram as sharp as McCarthy's description of Hellman—"Every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'"—were uttered on the air. But there seems to be no Great Writers or Great Feuds DVD collection in the works.

"We're running out of easy categories," Cavett says on the phone.

Cavett represented a fading connection between books and television, between words and images. Nowadays, he seems to be cleaving to the wordy side of things. Also, he is more wont to show anger, especially about two things: President Bush, and issues of grammar and pronunciation. He corrects me on the phone when I say "Eye-rack" instead of "Ee-rock," and the president's fondness for "nucular" has Cavett wondering if it is a deliberate mispronunciation calculated to win the votes of illiterates in the Republican base.

When I ask about his introduction to the wonderful episode with Fred Astaire, he says, "Astaire particularly reminded you of a time when everyone wanted to be American. . . . America was jazz and Fitzgerald. . . . Now our guts are the most hated viscera on earth." Point taken. I ask who his favorite talk show host is on television now, and Cavett tells me he hardly watches television anymore. When the Emmys were on, the onetime Emmy host says he recognized almost none of the awardees.

Compared with other well-known people who have to talk regularly to the press, Cavett is surprisingly uninhibited, a little like a guest on *The Dick Cavett Show*. As he answers questions, a public relations minder sits on the line, ready to save the old pro should things turn ugly, but it doesn't seem to affect him. He just goes on talking. ♦

POTUS on Horseback

Which comes first, the party or the president?

BY JOEL SCHWARTZ

James MacGregor Burns can succinctly be described as a poor man's Arthur Schlesinger: a prolific writer on American history for more than 50 years, whose scholarship is to some extent disfigured by Democratic partisanship. And partisanship is certainly to be found in Burns's new book, as when he observes that Republicans keep "faith with their values with . . . promises to destroy programs that provide a minimum of security to the ill and the aged." How's that for a fair and balanced assessment of Republican efforts at entitlement reform?

Running Alone
Presidential Leadership—JFK to Bush II: Why it Has Failed and How We Can Fix it
by James MacGregor Burns
Basic Books, 272 pp., $26

Overall, however, Burns's analysis here is relatively evenhanded, in that he examines a failing common to both Democratic and Republican presiden-

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cies—a failing that Burns traces to John F. Kennedy. Presidencies fail when presidents run (and subsequently govern) alone: "Running alone has become the dominant political strategy in the 40 years since Kennedy's death, with grave consequences for American government. . . . It has been the defining principle of presidential politics since Kennedy and a crucial factor in the failure of so many presidents to lead."

Although he does not seem to realize this, Burns means two different things when he speaks of running alone, and the two things are in tension with one another. Burns mostly equates running alone with a presidential candidate's running as an individual as opposed to a party leader: Such a candidate ignores his party, its platform, and its welfare. Thus, he faults Kennedy for his "separation from—even antagonism toward—the Democratic party." (Later Burns blames Nixon, Carter, and Clinton for similar failings. Nixon, for example, "exploited and degraded" the Republican party and achieved only a "personal"—as opposed to a "party"—victory in 1972.)

To run alone, as opposed to running as a party leader, is deplorable, because it is "a poor, even impossible, strategy for a leader hoping to weld government together to create some kind of transformation. Strong leadership require[s] that a president mobilize and unify followers numerous and committed enough to overcome the many forces resisting change."

But Burns also equates running alone with reluctance to consider a broad range of views from a variety of sources—a very different understanding, since it points less toward a partisan than a bipartisan or nonpartisan presidency. (If presidents need to hear a range of views, why should they restrict themselves to the views of their fellow party members?) Accordingly, Burns criticizes Kennedy for "cut[ting] himself off from the broader range of people and ideas that might be needed as new problems and crises arose," and Nixon for naming "not a single Democrat . . . to his cabinet." Conversely, LBJ is praised for achieving legislative successes by winning "cooperation from Republicans to overcome resistance from the Democratic party's conservative wing."

Bettmann / Corbis

Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964

Burns concludes, more broadly, that "a closed decisionmaking process, impervious to outside voices and alternative information, too often [leads] to misjudgments and flawed or incompetent execution." That is true enough, but this assessment seems to call for presidents who transcend partisanship more than they embody it.

Burns devotes most of this slim volume to necessarily superficial assessments of all the post-1960 presidencies. It is noteworthy that Reagan comes off better than any other president in this time period: Reagan's was "the most dynamic display of principled presidential leadership since the early years of Lyndon Johnson. Like LBJ, Reagan had seized the moment for dramatic action and had orchestrated a broad and unrelenting collective effort to achieve it. Even more than Johnson's Great Society, though, Reagan's 1981 economic program altered the landscape of American politics."

Burns concludes with an extremely sketchy discussion of solutions to the problems that he highlights. His first recommendation—"Needed: Party Polarization"—is odd: We already have party polarization, so how can it be what we need?

Burns's implausible answer is that the Republicans have become a conservative party, but the Democrats have not become a correspondingly liberal party. Republicans have replaced Democrats as the governing party by becoming "the solidly conservative party we know today," so that voters know where Republicans stand. Democrats must offer (to borrow a phrase from the past) a choice, not an echo: "The leading discouragement to

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voting is the belief that 'Parties are alike.'" So Democrats must make it clear that the crucial choice between the parties "will have an effect on [voters'] lives" by mobilizing a "new majority of forgotten men and women, . . . tens of millions of the unequal and the unempowered."

How, in practice, would Democrats accomplish this? Burns has nothing to say about policy proposals that Democrats should advance, apart from the following bromide: "Democrats must modernize and sharpen the durable economic issues of old: jobs, wages, education, women's rights, health. But more than that, they must send a strong, overarching message, with policy proposals set in a larger frame of liberal values."

Furthermore, why should anyone believe in the existence of a leftist silent majority? Burns simply ignores survey research that consistently shows that there are far more self-described conservatives than liberals in America: A third of Americans claim to be conservative, but only a fifth claim to be liberal (with almost half claiming to be moderate).

Burns concludes by advocating drastic changes to the American political system which, in effect, would make it a parliamentary system:

> Candidates for the presidency, Senate, and House would run together on party slates, just as the president and vice president presently do. Voters would cast their ballots for these slates, not individual candidates. Such an amendment would discourage politicians from running alone, apart from their parties. Candidates for both executive and legislative offices would have to cooperate in shaping a united campaign strategy and platform.

This radical constitutional change usefully points to the tension between the two understandings of what it means to "run alone." The alteration would clearly cement party loyalty and reduce intraparty conflict; but then both parties have already become far more homogeneous of late. On the other hand, if "running alone" means that presidents fail when they ignore opposition to their plans, the change would worsen matters: Members of Congress from the president's party would be discouraged from voting against (or even pointing to problems with) legislation supported by the president. You can have a more partisan presidency, and you can have one in which presidents are more likely to hear (whether or not they choose to heed) dissenting voices. But you can't have both simultaneously.

A final irony should be noted. As Burns realizes, one result of his plan would be to abolish midterm elections. In principle Burns supports their abolition, because they "historically [have] almost always caused the president to lose support in Congress and increased the chances of deadlock." Since Burns is a Democratic partisan, one wonders whether the results of the recent election have led him to second thoughts on this issue. Isn't it sometimes a good thing when presidents lose support in Congress, increasing the chances of deadlock? But this question should transcend partisanship. From a Democratic or Republican standpoint, enabling voters to produce divided government in any particular election may be undesirable; from a democratic and republican standpoint, however, it seems highly desirable. ♦

Lost in Translation

From colorful novel to black-and-white chaos.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

For that small but passionate subsection of moviegoers who attend George Clooney movies in hopes of seeing his cranium repeatedly subjected to violent blows, *The Good German* has arrived like a wondrous early Christmas present. In the first ten minutes of his new movie, George Clooney gets punched in the head. Then Clooney gets kicked in the head. Then Clooney gets hit in the head with a wooden stick. Then Clooney gets knocked upside his head with a rifle. Then Clooney has a chair broken over his head. Then Clooney's head is slammed into a wall.

The Good German
Directed by Steven Soderbergh

For a bonus, there's even a scene of Clooney—lantern-jawed, broad-shouldered, man's-man that he is—beaten senseless by puny, scrawny, 98-lbs.-soaking-wet Tobey Maguire.

But what is there for the rest of us to enjoy about *The Good German*? Well, for journalists still enraged by the memory of the plagiarisms of Ruth Shalit and the fabrications of Stephen Glass, there's the fact that Jake, Clooney's punching bag of a character, is a correspondent for the *New Republic*. But Jake is not suffering for the sins of Shalit and Glass. *The Good German* is set decades before they were born, in 1945 Berlin just weeks after the German surrender.

Clooney is a war correspondent who has ostensibly come to cover the Potsdam confab among Truman, Stalin, and Churchill. His real purpose, though, is to find Lena (Cate Blanchett), the married woman who was his mistress years earlier when he was the AP reporter there. It turns out that Jake's driver, Corporal Tully (Maguire), is Lena's paramour of sorts. Whom does Lena love? What happened to her husband? Why are the Russians in Berlin willing to pay

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Warner Brothers / courtesy Everett Collection

Cate Blanchett, George Clooney

200,000 marks to find the husband? Why are the Americans killing people to see that it doesn't happen?

And most important, why does Cate Blanchett sound like a cross between Natasha Nogoodnik, the Russki femme fatale on the Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons, and the German floozy-chantoozie played by Madeline Kahn in *Blazing Saddles*? Kahn was parodying Marlene Dietrich. Blanchett does her one better. She's parodying herself, in what will certainly be the worst performance this glorious actress has given or will ever give.

It fits the movie, though, which makes no sense whatsoever. The Americans are trying to get hold of German rocket scientists before the Russians do. They even have a rocket scientist holed up in a secret apartment. But why is the rocket scientist holed up in a secret apartment? Not to keep him from the Russians, who don't have access to the American zone in Berlin. Rather, they're keeping him away from an American prosecutor trying to bust Nazis. But then it turns out the American prosecutor is in on it with the American army.

So—once again—*why do they have the guy holed up in a secret apartment?*

The Good German is a ridiculous piece of work, and it's really a shame, because who doesn't long for a rich and juicy romantic melodrama starring two of the best-looking people on earth looking sharp in vintage 1940s clothing? Even sadder, it's based on a terrific potboiler of a novel by Joseph Kanon that could have made a great movie. But this isn't Kanon's *Good German*. Rather, it's *The Good German* as adapted by screenwriter Paul Attanasio and director Steven Soderbergh, and their adaptation is a disaster.

They decided that Kanon's novel was far too complicated a tale and chose to simplify it by merging characters and streamlining the plot. The result is narrative goo. Characters in the movie continually do inexplicably stupid things, and why? Because a different character in the novel did them and the filmmakers retained the action without retaining the character. Scenes that make perfect sense in the book are incoherent in the movie. Quite a trick.

The incompetence of the storytelling is due, in part, to the fact that director Soderbergh was far more interested in how he was making his movie than in the movie he was making. He decided to make *The Good German* almost as if he were filming it in 1945—in black-and-white, using period camera lenses and staging the proceedings on a studio backlot.

He's trying to be Michael Curtiz, the greatest of the studio hacks, director of *Casablanca* and *Mildred Pierce*. But while a Curtiz movie is certainly an exercise in style, it's far more than that. He was primarily an efficient storyteller who always managed to steer his audience through the curves and turns of a film noir plot with the skill of a Formula One driver. Steven Soderbergh handles *The Good German* like a trucker who gets his 18-wheeler trapped on a narrow street and has to smash cars on both sides to get out.

After the conclusion of principal photography, Clooney dissolved his partnership with Soderbergh. Maybe he was sick and tired of getting beaten up. ♦

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VLADIMIR PUTIN

got back to dacha from Big Mac run with Kato Kalinin around nine o'clock. Dropped Kato off at guest house and ambled big white Zil SUV up driveway, got out, and went to room alone. This much already known from court testimony. May have once indicated that then ate Big Macs and went to sleep until driver A. Parkov woke to pick up for plane to Minsk. Could be true.

But if did it, then must have slipped out back door, got in big white Zil, and quietly driven down driveway. Must have seen Kato through window of guest house, eating Big Macs and talking to houseplants. Once asked Kato (public record, reported by *Novoye Lyudi*) if Kato talked to plants in guest house because plants "bugged," ha-ha-ha. Kato didn't get joke. Said just likes to talk to houseplants.

Then must have driven to sushi bar for fateful meeting with FSB General Rossye-Griersky. "Alexander Litvinenko talks too much," must have said. Rossye-Greirsky must have nodded as biting into fat piece of chu-toro. "Want him gone for good. Berezovsky is big pain in butt, too," must have said. Rossye-Griersky must have wiped wasabi flecks from corner of lip. When eating sushi with messy FSB generals, soy sauce and wasabi get over everything. Even shoes, nice Bruno Maglis handmade in Italy. (Yes, Bruno Magli is very fine shoe; must have owned several pair at time.)

"Make sure," must have said, "to use foolproof method. Undetectable and untraceable. Maybe nice polonium isotope produced at single supersecret facility in whole Soviet Union—oops, ha-ha-ha, meant Russian Federation. Stupid Brits will never figure out." Rossye-Griersky must have

the weekly Standard
December 18, 2006

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